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JC10 Rec'd PCT/PTO 14 MAR 2002

Page 1

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|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| FORM PTO-1390 (REV 5-93) | | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE | | ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER 225/50974 | |
| TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371 | | | | U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 U.S.C. 371) 10/088024 | |
| INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/EP00/08329 | | INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 26 August 2000 (26.08.00) | | PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 14 September 1999 (14.09.99) | |
| TITLE OF INVENTION: METHOD FOR MONITORING TRAFFIC STATE FOR A TRAFFIC NETWORK WITH EFFECTIVE BOTTLENECKS | | | | | |
| APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US: Boris KERNER | | | | | |
| Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information: | | | | | |
| 1. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371. | | | |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371 | | | |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f) at any time rather than delay Examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1). | | | |
| 4. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date. | | | |
| 5. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)). | | | |
| | | a. | <input type="checkbox"/> | is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau). | |
| | | b. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | has been transmitted by the International Bureau (FORM PCT/IB/308 attached) | |
| | | c. | <input type="checkbox"/> | is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US) | |
| 6. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)). | | | |
| 7. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)) | | | |
| | | a. | <input type="checkbox"/> | are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau). | |
| | | b. | <input type="checkbox"/> | have been transmitted by the International Bureau. | |
| | | c. | <input type="checkbox"/> | have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired. | |
| | | d. | <input type="checkbox"/> | have not been made and will not be made. | |
| 8. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)). | | | |
| 9. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)) (Unexecuted - 1 page) | | | |
| 10. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)). | | | |
| Item 11. to 16. below concern other document(s) or information included: | | | | | |
| 11. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98. | | | |
| 12. | <input type="checkbox"/> | An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included. | | | |
| 13. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A FIRST preliminary amendment. | | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment. | | | |
| 14. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A substitute specification and marked-up copy thereof. | | | |
| 15. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A change of power of attorney and/or address letter. | | | |
| 16. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other items or information: | | | |
| | | a. Form PCT/IB/308 | | | |
| | | b. Five (5) sheets of drawings showing Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | | | |
| | | c. First page of published International Application (WO 01/20574 A1) | | | |
| | | d. Application Data Sheet (2 pages) | | | |

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|--|--------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) | | INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. | | ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER | |
| 10/088024 | | PCT/EP00/08329 | | 225/50974 | |
| 17. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted: | | | | CALCULATIONS | PTO USE ONLY |
| Basic National Fee (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)): | | | | \$ 890.00 | |
| Search Report has been prepared by the EPO or JPO \$ 890.00 | | | | | |
| International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) \$ 690.00 | | | | | |
| No international preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) but international search fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) \$ 740.00 | | | | | |
| Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor International search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$ 1000.00 | | | | | |
| International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(2)-(4) \$ 100.00 | | | | | |
| ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT = | | | | \$ 890.00 | |
| Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)). | | | | \$ 130.00 | |
| Claims | Number Filed | Number Extra | Rate | | |
| Total Claims | 8 - 20 = | 0 | X \$18.00 | \$ | |
| Independent Claims | 1 - 3 = | 0 | X \$84.00 | \$ | |
| Multiple dependent claims(s) (if applicable) | | | + \$280.00 | \$ | |
| TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS= | | | | \$130.00 | |
| Applicant claims Small Entity Status (See 37 CFR §1.27) <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no. Reduction by 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. | | | | \$ | |
| SUBTOTAL = | | | | \$1,020.00 | |
| Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)). | | | | \$ | |
| TOTAL NATIONAL FEE = | | | | \$1,020.00 | |
| Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28,3.31). \$40.00 per property + | | | | \$ | |
| TOTAL FEE ENCLOSED = | | | | \$1,020.00 | |
| | | | | Amount to be: refunded | \$ |
| | | | | Charged | \$ |
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Two checks in the amount of \$ for the filing fee and \$40.00 for the assignment recording fee are enclosed | | | | | |
| b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. <u>05-1323</u> in the amount of \$ <u>1,020.00</u> to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. | | | | | |
| c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees, which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. <u>05-1323</u> . A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. | | | | | |
| NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status. | | | | | |
| SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: | | | | | |
| Crowell & Moring, LLP | | | | SIGNATURE | |
| Intellectual Property Group | | | | Gary R. Edwards | |
| P.O. Box 14300 | | | | NAME | |
| Washington, D.C. 20044-4300 | | | | 31,824 | |
| Tel. No. (202) 624-2500 | | | | REGISTRATION NUMBER | |
| Fax No. (202) 628-8844 | | | | 14 MARCH 2002 | |
| GRE:kms | | | | DATE | |

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Rec'd PCT/PTO 19 JUL 2002

Attorney Docket: 225/50974
PATENT

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: BORIS KERNER
Serial No.: 10/088,024
Filed: MARCH 14, 2002
Title: METHOD FOR MONITORING THE CONDITION OF TRAFFIC
FOR A TRAFFIC NETWORK COMPRISING EFFECTIVE
NARROW POINTS

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Box Non-Fee AMENDMENT
Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

July 19, 2002

Sir:

Please enter the following amendments to the specification, claims and abstract prior to the examination of the application.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the substitute specification as follows: (A copy of a marked up version with markings to show changes made is attached hereto.)

Amend the first full paragraph on page 4 as follows:

Various methods are already known for monitoring and predicting traffic "congestion point" (frequently called a "moving jam"). See, for example, the automatic congestion dynamics analysis described in German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, and methods known from the literature mentioned there.

Amend the paragraph bridging pages 8 and 9 as follows:

In the case of increasing traffic, and specifically at effective bottlenecks (which may be primarily stationary bottlenecks, but in some incidences may include moveable bottlenecks such as very slowly moving road-construction or road-maintenance vehicles or migrating building sites), a formerly free traffic state will frequently be initially transformed into a so-called region of synchronized traffic upstream of the bottleneck, whilst resulting (depending on further traffic) in a pattern, typical of the bottleneck, of dense traffic. In the minimum version, this pattern may comprise only the region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck upstream. The formation of a pinch region is also observed in the case of increasing traffic volume and/or appropriate route infrastructure. Congestion points can develop from this pinch region and propagate upstream, since it is possible for free or synchronized traffic or a pinch region to be present between each two congestion points. The region in which the widespread congestion propagates upstream (by contrast with the localized congestion occurring in pinch regions) is denoted as a region of "moving widespread congestion" (frequently called a "wide moving jam"). (See e.g., B.S.

pattern of dense traffic can trigger this phase transition. This phase transition occurs when, depending on the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, the state of free traffic at the upstream effective bottleneck was already [unstable] metastable in any case with the result that the occurrence of the upstream end of the pattern, belonging to the first effective bottleneck, of dense traffic “triggers” the phase transition there. As a result of this phase transition, a region of synchronized traffic or a pinch region is then formed in turn farther upstream of the upstream, second effective bottleneck.

Amend the first full paragraph on page 32 as follows:

This is the reason why in the state phase of synchronized traffic a pinch region can arise in which these excess vehicles are stored in the typical temporary “narrow” congestion point. The specified criterion $Q_n - Q_{smax} \geq \Delta Q_1$ for a time interval $\Delta t \geq \Delta t_1$ can therefore be used as criterion for the production of the reduced pattern form in accordance with Figures 1 and 2, and most accurately when the net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ of synchronized traffic in accordance with Figure 1 for each direction of influx and outflow.

Amend the paragraph bridging pages 32 and 33 as follows:

When the difference $Q_n - Q_{smax}$ is on average above a second excess value ΔQ_2 during a period Δt greater than or equal to a second minimum period

Δt_2 , the second excess value ΔQ_2 being greater than the first excess value ΔQ_1 and/or the second minimum time interval Δt_2 being greater than the first minimum time interval Δt_1 it is necessary for yet more excess vehicles to be stored upstream of the localization point of the effective bottleneck, for which reason the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region. In this case, the excess vehicles are stored not only in temporary narrow congestion points, but also in lasting widespread ones. This criterion can therefore be used to detect a formation of the full pattern in accordance with Figure 3, and is at its most exact when the total net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2, once again for each direction of influx and outflow.

(Applicant's Remarks are set forth hereinbelow, starting on the following page.)


REMARKS

Entry of the amendments to the substitute specification before examination of the application is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this Preliminary Amendment or this application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #225/50974).

Respectfully submitted,



Gary R. Edwards
Registration No. 31,824

CROWELL & MORING, LLP
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Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
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GRE:kms
(CAM 95309.305)

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO THE
SPECIFICATION

Please amend the substitute specification as follows:

Amend the first full paragraph on page 4 as follows:

Various methods are already known for monitoring and predicting traffic "congestion point" (frequently called a "moving jam"). See, for example, the automatic congestion dynamics analysis described in German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, and methods known from the literature mentioned there.

Amend the paragraph bridging pages 8 and 9 as follows:

In the case of increasing traffic, and specifically at effective bottlenecks (which may be primarily stationary bottlenecks, but in some incidences may include moveable bottlenecks such as very slowly moving road-construction or road-maintenance vehicles or migrating building sites), a formerly free traffic state will frequently be initially transformed into a so-called region of synchronized traffic upstream of the bottleneck, whilst resulting (depending on further traffic) in a pattern, typical of the bottleneck, of dense traffic. In the minimum version, this pattern may comprise only the region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck upstream. The formation of a pinch

region is also observed in the case of increasing traffic volume and/or appropriate route infrastructure. Congestion points can develop from this pinch region and propagate upstream, since it is possible for free or synchronized traffic or a pinch region to be present between each two congestion points. The region in which the widespread congestion propagates upstream (by contrast with the localized congestion occurring in pinch regions) is denoted as a region of "moving widespread congestion" (frequently called a "wide moving jam"). (See e.g., B.S. Kerner, "Experimental features of the emergence of moving jams in free flow traffic, J. of Physics A: Mathematical and General, vol. 33, pp L221-L228 (2000).)

Amend the second, third and fourth full paragraphs on page 13 as follows:

Figure 1 is a diagram which shows, for a particular point in time, a route section of a road traffic network with an effective bottleneck, and an upstream pattern of dense traffic, which comprises a region of synchronized traffic;

Figure 2 is an illustration similar to Figure 1, but for a pattern at a particular point in time of dense traffic which also includes a pinch region;

Figure 3 is an illustration includes a region of moving widespread congestion at a particular point in time;

Amend the paragraph bridging pages 26 and 27 as follows:

The development of such an overarching pattern starts at the point in time in which the upstream end of a first pattern, belonging to the said first, downstream effective bottleneck, reaches the position of the second effective bottleneck, situated closest upstream. Since the production of synchronized traffic from free traffic at each effective bottleneck is a phase transition of "first order" which arises from every interruption of the traffic which is greater than a critical interruption, the occurrence of the upstream end of the first, downstream pattern of dense traffic can trigger this phase transition. This phase transition occurs when, depending on the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, the state of free traffic at the upstream effective bottleneck was already [unstable] metastable in any case with the result that the occurrence of the upstream end of the pattern, belonging to the first effective bottleneck, of dense traffic "triggers" the phase transition there. As a result of this phase transition, a region of synchronized traffic or a pinch region is then formed in turn farther upstream of the upstream, second effective bottleneck.

Amend the first full paragraph on page 32 as follows:

This is the reason why in the state phase of synchronized traffic a pinch region can arise in which these excess vehicles are stored in the typical temporary "narrow" congestion point. The specified criterion $Q_n - Q_{smax} \geq \Delta Q_1$ for a time interval $\Delta t \geq \Delta t_1$ can therefore be used as criterion for the production of the reduced pattern form in accordance with [Figure 2,] Figures 1 and 2, and most accurately when the net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of

the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ of synchronized traffic in accordance with Figure 1 for each direction of influx and outflow.

Amend the paragraph bridging pages 32 and 33 as follows:

When the difference $Q_n - Q_{smax}$ is on average above a second excess value ΔQ_2 during a period Δt greater than or equal to a second minimum period Δt_2 , the second excess value ΔQ_2 being greater than the first excess value ΔQ_1 and/or the second minimum time interval Δt_2 being greater than the first minimum time interval $[\Delta Q_1,] \underline{\Delta t_1}$ it is necessary for yet more excess vehicles to be stored upstream of the localization point of the effective bottleneck, for which reason the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region. In this case, the excess vehicles are stored not only in temporary narrow congestion points, but also in lasting widespread ones. This criterion can therefore be used to detect a formation of the full pattern in accordance with Figure 3, and is at its most exact when the total net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2, once again for each direction of influx and outflow.

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JC13 Rec'd PCT/PTO 14 MAR 2002

Attorney Docket: 225/50974
PATENT

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: BORIS KERNER
Serial No.: NOT YET ASSIGNED PCT No. PCT/EP00/08329
Filed: MARCH 14, 2002
Title: METHOD FOR MONITORING THE CONDITION OF TRAFFIC
FOR A TRAFFIC NETWORK COMPRISING EFFECTIVE
NARROW POINTS

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Box PCT
Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

March 14, 2002

Sir:

Please enter the following amendments to the specification and claims, as amended by way of Annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report for PCT/EP00/08329, prior to the examination of the application during the U.S. National Phase.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Submitted herewith is a substitute specification and marked-up copy thereof which includes the changes made by way of the Annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel all of the claims presently in the application and substitute new claims 9-16 as follows:

9. (New) Method for monitoring a traffic state in a traffic network which may incur one or more effective bottlenecks, said method comprising:

recording measured traffic data for at least one traffic parameter, including at least one of information on traffic intensity and average vehicle speed;

based on the recorded information, classifying the traffic state into one of a plurality of state phases including at least the state phases of "free traffic" and "synchronized traffic"; wherein,

when an edge fixed at an effective bottleneck of the traffic network is detected between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic, the traffic state upstream of said bottleneck is classified as conforming to a pattern of dense traffic that is representative of the bottleneck, which pattern includes one or more different consecutive upstream regions of different state phase composition; and

an associated profile of the traffic parameters is taken into account in classifying the state phase determination.

10.. (New) The method according to Claim 9, wherein:

when an individual pattern of dense traffic arising initially at an effective bottleneck in a particular route section, reaches a next preceding effective bottleneck in an upstream direction, classifying a traffic state in this particular route section as conforming to an overarching pattern, representative of included effective bottlenecks of dense traffic which, like a respective individual pattern, includes one or more different consecutive upstream regions of different state phase composition; and

an associated profile of the traffic parameters is taken into account in classifying the state phase.

11. (new) The method according to Claim 9, wherein:

pattern assigned to an effective bottleneck or as overarching pattern common, to a plurality of effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic with a time-dependent and location-dependent traffic parameter profile, is empirically determined from recorded measured traffic data and stored in a manner which can be called up.

12. (New) The method according to Claim 11, wherein:

for a particular bottleneck, it is established as a function of vehicle influx, whether the pattern comprises one of three pattern variants, being i) only a region of synchronized traffic, ii) a region of synchronized traffic and a pinch region adjoining upstream, or iii) a region of synchronized traffic, a pinch region adjoining upstream and a region of moving widespread congestion adjoining upstream;

associated edge positions are determined between the respective different state phases; and

each of the three pattern variants is assigned a corresponding time-dependent and location-dependent profile of the average vehicle speed and/or the traffic flow and/or the traffic density.

13. (New) The method according to Claim 10, wherein:

for the traffic network, it is established as a function of vehicle flows, where and in what temporal sequence overarching patterns arise, in what temporal and spatial sequence regions of “synchronized traffic”, “pinch region” and “moving widespread congestion” arise and develop in each overarching pattern, and whether overlaps of such regions take place; and

for a particular overlap, temporal and spatial characteristics of congestion points through regions of synchronized traffic and/or congested synchronized traffic are predicted.

14. (New) The method according to Claim 12, wherein the temporal evolution of at least one of edge positions of the regions of a respective pattern of dense traffic, edge positions of congestion points inside various overarching patterns, and occurrence of a new overarching pattern, is currently estimated and predicted for future points in time.

15. (New) The method according to Claim 12, wherein travel time for respective individual or overarching patterns of dense traffic currently estimated or predicted for future points in time.

16. (New) The method according to Claim 12, wherein:

current vehicle influx data is detected for respective individual or overarching patterns of dense traffic;

current data indicative of positions of the edges between the pattern regions are determined; and

Serial No. NOT YET ASSIGNED
PCT/EP00/08329

these current data are used to select a best-fitting pattern profile from among stored pattern profiles, which pattern is used as a basis for predicting a future traffic state in the relevant route region.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please substitute the new Abstract of the Disclosure submitted herewith on a separate page for the original Abstract presently in the application.

(Applicant's Remarks are set forth hereinbelow, starting on the following page.)

Serial No. NOT YET ASSIGNED
PCT/EP00/08329

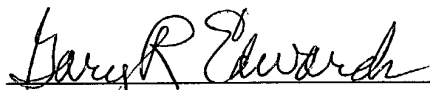
REMARKS

Entry of the amendments to the specification and claims, as amended by way of Annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report for PCT/EP00/08329, before examination of the application in the U.S. National Phase is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this Preliminary Amendment or this application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #225/50974).

Respectfully submitted,



Gary R. Edwards
Registration No. 31,824

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P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
(CAM 95309.305)

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In a method for monitoring traffic conditions in a traffic network with effective bottlenecks, the traffic state is classified, taking account of recorded measured traffic data for one or more traffic parameters, including information on the traffic intensity or the average vehicle speed, into in each case one of a plurality of state phases which comprise at least the state phases of free traffic and synchronized traffic. In the case of an edge at an effective bottleneck, between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic, the traffic state upstream thereof is classified as a pattern, representative of the respective bottleneck, of dense traffic which includes one or more different consecutive upstream, of different state phase composition; and an associated profile of the traffic parameters is taken into account for the state phase determination.

Attorney Docket: 225/50974
PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: BORIS KERNER
Serial No.: NOT YET ASSIGNED PCT No. PCT/EP00/08329
Filed: MARCH 14, 2002
Title: METHOD FOR MONITORING THE CONDITION OF TRAFFIC
FOR A TRAFFIC NETWORK COMPRISING EFFECTIVE
NARROW POINTS

SUBMISSION OF SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION

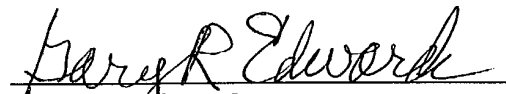
Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

March 14, 2002

Sir:

Attached is a Substitute Specification and a marked-up copy of the original specification. I certify that said substitute specification contains no new matter and includes the changes indicated in the marked-up copy of the original specification.

Respectfully submitted,



Gary R. Edwards
Registration No. 31,824

CROWELL & MORING, LLP
Intellectual Property Group
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
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(CAM 95309.305)

METHOD FOR MONITORING TRAFFIC STATE FOR A TRAFFIC NETWORK WITH
EFFECTIVE BOTTLENECKS

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This application claims the priority of PCT International Application No. PCT/EP00/08329, filed 26 August 2000 and German Patent Document 199 44 075.1, filed 14 September 1999, the disclosure of which is expressly incorporated by reference herein.

The invention is related to a method for monitoring[, including predicting the] and forecasting traffic [state] conditions in a traffic network (particularly a road network) with effective bottlenecks. [, in particular in a corresponding road traffic network, according to the preamble of Claim 1. In this case,] As used herein, the phrase "effective bottlenecks" is [are] to be understood to include both [as] bottlenecks in the actual sense, [that is to say] (a reduction in the number of usable lanes), and bottlenecks in the [wider] broader sense, such as are caused, [which,] for example, [are caused] by one or more incoming feeder lanes, [or by] a bend, a grade, a downgrade, a division of a lane into two or more lanes, one or more exits or a bottleneck moving slowly (by comparison with the average vehicle speed in

free traffic), for example owing to a vehicle which is being driven slowly.

Various methods [Methods] for monitoring and [predicting the] forecasting traffic conditions of this generic type [state in a traffic network, for example a road traffic network,] are [variously] known, and of particular interest also for diverse telematics applications in vehicles. One aim of these methods is to obtain, from measured [the] traffic [measured] data detected at traffic measuring points, a qualitative description of the traffic state at the respective measuring point and its surroundings. Measuring points in this sense include [are presently] both those [measuring points] installed in a stationary fashion on the route network [side], and moveable measuring points such as [are represented], for example, [by] sample vehicles moving [floating along] in the traffic (so-called "floating cars") or by a measurement of the traffic flow obtained by means of monitoring from deep space, space or the air.

For the purpose of qualitative description of the traffic state, it is known to divide the latter into various phases, for example into a phase of "free traffic", in [the case of] which relatively fast vehicles can overtake without a problem, a phase of "synchronized traffic", in [the case of] which

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

possibilities for overtaking scarcely exist, but a high traffic intensity still prevails, and a phase of "congestion", in the case of which the vehicles are virtually stationary and also the traffic intensity drops to very low values. (See, [- see,] for example, the journal article by B.S. Kerner and H. Rehborn, "Experimental properties of complexity in traffic flow", Physical Review E 53, R 4275, 1996.) [In this case, the phase of] As used herein, "synchronized traffic" is to be understood both as a state in [the case of] which, [owing to the fact that] because there are scarcely any possibilities of overtaking [in this phase], all vehicles in different lanes are driven at a very similar, "synchronized" speed, [as is,] (for example [, the case in particular] on route sections without approach roads and exits), and a traffic state in [the case of] which the distribution of speed for the vehicles in different lanes can [still] differ, but there is a tendency for synchronization of the speeds of those vehicles in different lanes which are respectively being driven on an identical route, since there are scarcely any possibilities of overtaking with reference to one driving route.

The phase division is based on the idea of selecting the phases such that each of them corresponds to specific characteristic properties of the traffic flow, [such that] making it [is] possible to estimate the temporal and spatial

extent of route sections in which the traffic state is in a specific phase. In the journal article by B.S. Kerner, "Experimental Features of Self-Organization in Traffic Flow", Physical Review Letters, Vol. 81, No. 17, page 3797, so called "pinch regions" (regions of "congested synchronized traffic") are selected in the phase of "synchronized traffic", and are subsequently treated specially. These are regions inside synchronized traffic in which it is possible to drive only at very low speeds and in which there is spontaneous formation of short-lived congestion states which can migrate upstream and grow in the process, and which can then possibly lead to a lasting congestion state.

Various methods are already known for monitoring and predicting [the] traffic [state] "congestion point". See, for example, [-see] the automatic congestion dynamics analysis described in [Laid-Open Application] German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, and methods known from the literature mentioned there.

In [the older] German [Patent Application No.] patent document 198 35 979.9, which is not a prior publication, [and whose content is incorporated herein by reference,] there is, moreover, a description of the monitoring and [prediction]

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

In a related, co-pending German patent application [(our file P032254/DE/1) submitted in parallel, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, there is a description of a traffic, state monitoring method in the case of which] the current traffic conditions are [state is] monitored with regard to different state phases, particularly [and, in particular, with regard to] synchronized traffic and a pinch region as well as the phase transition between states of synchronized traffic on the one hand, and free traffic, on the other hand. The [, and the] future traffic state is predicted on this basis, if required. In particular, this method can be used to estimate the edges of regions of synchronized traffic relatively accurately for current points in time, or to predict [for] future points in time at which such [said] edges are not (or will not) be located at a measuring point, but somewhere between two measuring points. [A suitably] Suitably designed fuzzy logic is preferably used in this case.

In German patent document [Laid-Open Patent Application] DE 199 44 077 A1, (not prior art) [published after the priority date, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, there is a description of a traffic, state monitoring method in the case of which] the current traffic state is monitored with regard to different state phases and, in particular, with regard to synchronized traffic and a pinch

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

region as well as the phase transition between states of synchronized traffic, on the one hand, and free traffic, on the other hand. The [, and the] future traffic state is predicted on this basis, if required. In particular, this method can be used to estimate the edges of regions of synchronized traffic relatively accurately for current points in time or to predict [for] future points in time at which [said] such edges are not (or will not be) located at a measuring point, but somewhere between two measuring points. A suitably designed fuzzy logic is preferably used in this case. ,

European patent document [Laid-Open Specification] EP 0 884 708 A2 discloses a method for predicting [the] traffic [state] conditions in a traffic network having nodes and edges running therebetween. Detection [, in the case of which detection] data referring to the current traffic are acquired and transmitted to a control [centre] center which uses them to describe [undertake a description of] the current traffic state on the traffic network in the form of respective traffic phases which [respectively] represent the state on an edge or an edge section. It [, and] predicts the traffic state by calculating at least the movements and future positions of the traffic phases. The phases are described in binary fashion in the form of the phases of "free" and "congested"; in the [or in] five [stages in the form of the] phases of "free", "busy",

"dense", "sluggish" and "congested"[,]; or by using another number of different phases. For prediction, use is made of phase boundary speeds which, for example, are calculated by linear regression with the aid of current and earlier detection data, or as the quotient of the difference between the incoming and departing flow at the phase boundary and the difference between the vehicle density upstream and downstream of the phase boundary.

One object of [As a technical problem,] the invention is [based on the provision of] to provide a method [of the type mentioned at the beginning with the aid of which] for reliably monitoring the current traffic state, [can be monitored comparatively reliably] specifically even in [the] a region upstream of effective bottlenecks, and for reliably predicting [a comparatively reliable prediction of] the future traffic state. [is also possible on this basis, if required.]

[The invention solves this problem by providing a method with the features of Claim 1. This method is distinguished, in particular, in that] This and other objects and a other objects and advantages are achieved by the method according to the invention, in which the traffic state upstream of [a respective] an effective bottleneck [of the traffic network] is classified [as a] to a particular pattern of dense traffic,

whenever [when] an edge fixed at the relevant effective bottleneck is detected between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic[,] (that is, [to say] when dense traffic forms upstream of the bottleneck). The pattern classification of the traffic state includes a division of the traffic upstream of the bottleneck into one or more consecutive upstream regions[, consecutive upstream,] of different state phase composition. Moreover, the pattern classification includes a profile, dependent on state phase, time and location, of traffic parameters taken into account for the state phase determination, such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or traffic density.

In the case of increasing traffic, and specifically at effective bottlenecks (which may be primarily [can mostly be] stationary bottlenecks, but [also,] in some incidences[,] may include moveable bottlenecks such as very slowly moving road-construction or road-maintenance vehicles or migrating building sites), a formerly free traffic state will frequently be initially transformed into [the] a so-called region of synchronized traffic upstream of the bottleneck, whilst resulting[,] (depending on further traffic) [,] in a pattern, typical of the bottleneck, of dense traffic. In the minimum version, this pattern [can] may comprise only the region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck

upstream. The formation of a pinch region is also [additionally] observed in the case of increasing traffic volume and/or appropriate route infrastructure. Congestion points can develop from this pinch region and propagate upstream, since it is [being] possible for free or synchronized traffic or a pinch region to be present between each two congestion points. The region in which the widespread congestion [propagating] propagates upstream (by contrast with the localized congestion occurring in pinch regions) [is situated] is denoted as a region of "moving widespread congestion".

As a result of these findings, in the case of detection of synchronized traffic moving upstream of a bottleneck [it is possible by means of] the method according to the invention makes it possible to use comparatively fewer current or predicted measured traffic data to assign the traffic state to a fitting pattern typical of the respective bottleneck. [The further] Further analysis or evaluation and[, specifically,] also [the] prediction of the future traffic state [to be expected in future] can then be performed on the basis of this pattern recognition with the aid of comparatively little data material which is to be processed, and consequently with correspondingly slight computation outlay. A further essential advantage of this method [consists in] is that, by contrast

with mathematical traffic state models with many parameters [which are] to be validated, it includes a pattern-based [modelling] modeling without parameters to be validated.

[A method developed according to Claim 2] One embodiment
of the invention permits the pattern classification of the
traffic state even [for the case in which] when a pattern,
arising initially at an effective bottleneck, of dense traffic
has extended beyond one or more further, upstream effective
bottlenecks. [It is seen that the pattern classification is
also possible for this case, and the] The overarching pattern
is built up from the same regions as an individual pattern
including only one effective bottleneck. That is, [that is to
say] the overarching pattern also comprises the
characteristics of regions of "synchronized traffic", "pinch
regions" and "moving widespread congestion".

[In a method developed according to Claim 3,] According to a feature of the invention, the pattern determined as a function of time and location for a respective bottleneck is determined empirically from recorded traffic measured data and stored in a fashion which can be called up. As a result, it is possible at any later point in time at which a fixed edge is detected at the bottleneck between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic, to select the pattern profile

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

which best fits the measured traffic data currently recorded or predicted for the relevant point in time from the stored pattern profiles. The latter can be used as a [, and to use it as] current or predicted traffic state for the corresponding route section of the traffic network upstream of the bottleneck.

[In the case of a method developed according to Claim 4, the] In another embodiment of the invention, a dense traffic state upstream of an effective bottleneck is distinguished as a function of vehicle influx in accordance with three pattern variants, and each of the three variants is assigned a corresponding time- and location-dependent pattern profile for one or more of the important traffic parameters of "mean vehicle speed", "traffic flow" and "traffic density". In [the case of] a first variant, the pattern comprises only one region of synchronized traffic. In [the case of] a second variant, the pattern additionally comprises a pinch region adjoining upstream, and in [the case of] a third pattern variant there is in addition a region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region. The associated, generally time-dependent edge positions between the various pattern regions are determined by respectively suitable methods, for example of the type mentioned at the beginning.

[A method developed according to Claim 5] Still another embodiment of the invention permits the detection and tracking of overarching patterns of dense traffic in the considered traffic network as a function of the vehicle flows. In particular, the location and time of the resolution of a respective overarching pattern and the sequence of the individual regions of "synchronized traffic", "pinch region" and "moving widespread congestion" can be determined in each overarching pattern as a function of the vehicle flows. Moreover, the temporal and spatial characteristic of congestion points propagating upstream by means of regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions can be predicted when a region of "moving widespread congestion" overlaps in an overarching pattern with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions.

[In a] A further refinement of this measure of determining the edge position [, the method according to Claim 6 provides] includes a temporal tracking of the positions of diverse edges between the various pattern regions and/or congestion points in overarching patterns and/or the detection of newly occurring overarching patterns, [with the result] so that the position and extent of each of the regions[,] (which differ in their state phase composition) [,] of an individual

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

or overarching pattern can be tracked in temporal development.

In still another embodiment of the invention, [the case of a method developed according to Claim 7,] the expected travel time [expected to be] required for [transversing] traversing the route section in which the individual or overarching pattern of the dense traffic is located is additionally determined as a function of time and stored. The stored travel time information can be used, for example, directly within the framework of a method for estimating travel times, currently to be expected or to be expected in future for prediction, for travelling specific, prescribable routes of the traffic network.

[In a development of the method according to Claim 8,] Finally, according to still another embodiment of the invention, the positions of associated edges and the influx to the pattern are detected currently after detection of an individual or overarching pattern. This information is used to select the pattern profile which best fits therewith from the stored pattern profiles, and to carry out a prediction on the further development of the pattern of dense traffic at the relevant effective bottleneck. This can comprise, in particular, a prediction of relevant traffic state parameters

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Other objects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[Advantageous embodiments of the invention are illustrated in the drawings and described below. In the drawings:]

Figure 1 [shows] is a [diagrammatic illustration of] diagram which shows a route section of a road traffic network with an effective bottleneck, and [of] an upstream pattern of dense traffic, which comprises a region of synchronized traffic[,];

Figure 2 [shows] is an illustration [according] similar to Figure 1, but for a pattern of dense traffic which also [additionally] includes a pinch region[,]i

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

Figure 3 [shows] is an illustration [according to Figure 2, but for a pattern of dense traffic which additionally] includes a region of moving widespread congestion[,];

Figure 4 [shows] is a [diagrammatic illustration of] diagram which shows a determination of current and future traffic states at a measuring point for the purpose of monitoring and predicting traffic states including patterns of dense traffic upstream of bottlenecks[,]; and

Figure 5 shows a view corresponding to Figure 4, but for the case of an edge, situated between two measuring points, between free and synchronized traffic.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows an [illustrates by virtue of] example of a route section of a directional lane of a road traffic network [such as,] (for example, a motorway section) [,] whose traffic state is estimated [, for example,] by a traffic [centre] center for the current point in time. (That is, it is [, that is to say] determined by computer, and is predicted for future points in time.) Permanently installed and/or moveable measuring points are provided, as required, in order to detect measured traffic data serving this purpose. The measured data

are received as appropriate by the traffic [centre] center and appropriately evaluated by a computation unit there. [Reference may be made for further details of the implementation of such] Such traffic state monitoring systems [to] are discussed, for example, in the literature referred to previously. [quoted at the beginning and, in particular, also to the German patent application mentioned there and submitted in parallel.]

[Characteristic of the] The present traffic state monitoring system utilizes [is the implementation of] a monitoring method that includes [which comprises] detection of typical pattern profiles of dense traffic upstream of effective bottlenecks and classification of the same. This information makes it [, with the aid of which it is then] possible [for] to estimate the current traffic state [to be estimated] comparatively easily and reliably, and [likewise] also to predict the traffic state to be expected in future in this route region.

Figure 1 shows [the case of] an example in which an effective bottleneck is located at a route position $x_{S,F}$. [and, owing] Due to correspondingly high traffic volume, an edge $F_{S,F}$ fixed there has formed between a downstream region B_F of free traffic and an upstream region B_S of synchronized traffic. The

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

formation of such an edge $F_{S,F}$ can be detected, for example, with the aid of the method described in [the above-named] German [Patent Application No.] patent document 198 90 35 979.9, referred to previously. In this case, it can be a spatially fixed bottleneck such as, for example, a permanent lane reduction at this point; [,] but it [can] may also be a moveable bottleneck, as formed, for example, by a "migrating building site" or very slowly moving road-construction vehicles.

[In the case of the] Upon detection of such a fixed edge $F_{S,F}$ between downstream free traffic B_F and upstream synchronized traffic B_S , the method then classifies the traffic state upstream of the effective bottleneck into a pattern of dense traffic, using [. This uses] the experimentally observed fact that in [the case of] increased traffic volume, entirely typical pattern profiles of dense traffic form upstream of such effective bottlenecks. That [, that] is, [to say] the traffic state there can be classified into certain typical variants of a pattern of dense traffic.

Treating the traffic state in this region as a pattern of dense traffic then permits a comparatively reliable prediction of the future traffic state and of the travel time required to traverse this region with a relatively low computational

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

outlay and relatively few items of measured data information. For this purpose, a specific pattern of the dense traffic is assigned upstream of the respective effective bottleneck, in particular at all points with approach roads, on the basis of measurements of the traffic[,] (that is, [to say] measurements of traffic parameters representative the traffic state). Such a pattern of dense traffic includes appropriate time-dependent and location-dependent profiles of the considered traffic parameters such as the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and preferably also the travel time corresponding to the pattern respectively present. It [is to be seen] should be noted that these temporal/spatial profiles of the pattern of dense traffic deviate clearly, by more than a prescribed measure, from the corresponding profiles of free traffic. [It is to be seen, furthermore,] Furthermore, it should also be noted that the respective temporal/spatial profiles, [respectively] assigned to the pattern of dense traffic, of the traffic parameters which are considered (such as the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density), and the travel time belonging to the pattern, have characteristic properties in the case of each effective bottleneck. These properties are characteristic in the sense that they can be reproduced and predicted for different times, for example different times of day and/or different days. That [, that] is, [to say that]

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

these characteristic properties, including their characteristic time dependence, can be predicted without validating the parameters of a traffic prediction model used.

As has been said, in the example of Figure 1 the pattern of dense traffic comprises solely the region B_s of synchronized traffic with a downstream edge $F_{s,F}$ at the location $x_{s,F}$ of the effective bottleneck and an upstream edge $F_{F,s}$, whose position $x_{F,s}$ is determined by measurement and computation and is tracked for its temporal development. The upstream edge $F_{F,s}$ [, and which] is adjoined upstream by a further region B_F of free traffic.

A further, typically occurring variant of the pattern of dense traffic is illustrated in Figure 2 and includes, in addition to the region B_s of synchronized traffic, a pinch region B_{gs} adjoining upstream at the upstream edge $F_{gs,s}$ thereof. In [the case of] such a pinch region (that is, [region of] congested synchronized traffic), narrow congestion points arise in otherwise synchronized traffic, but they are not individually tracked. [In order to divide] Division of the traffic state into the [state] phases of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic" with or without "pinch regions" and "congestion point", [see also] are described, for example, in the [abovementioned] above-mentioned German patent document DE

199 44 077 A1 in which suitable measures are also specified for temporal tracking of the position $x_{GS,S}$ of the downstream edge $F_{GS,S}$, and the position $x_{F,GS}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$, at which a region B_F of free traffic adjoins upstream in turn.

Given an appropriately large traffic volume and/or an appropriate route infrastructure, a pattern of dense traffic as illustrated in Figure 3 can be formed as a further, fully expressed variant. In addition to the region B_s of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{gs} adjoining upstream thereof, this comprises a region B_{st} (adjoining upstream thereof) of moving widespread congestion which is finally adjoined upstream again by a region B_f of free traffic. In other words, the presently classified pattern of dense traffic upstream of an effective bottleneck generally comprises the three regions, occurring consecutively upstream[,]: of synchronized traffic B_s , congested synchronized traffic (pinch region) B_{gs} and moving widespread congestion B_{st} . [, of which]

Figures 2 and 1 show reduced forms in which the region B_{St} of "moving widespread congestion" and, additionally, the pinch region B_{GS} are lacking, such as [something which] is the case, in particular, in the starting phase of the complete pattern of Figure 3. In other words, the complete pattern according to Figure 3 is formed upstream of an effective bottleneck,

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

typically in the sequence of Figures 1 to 3, because [by virtue of the fact that] the region B_s of synchronized traffic firstly arises at the effective bottleneck. The [, and the] pinch region B_{gs} and possibly also the region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion are then formed upstream of [said] the region BS when the traffic volume remains sufficiently large and/or is permitted by the infrastructure of the corresponding route section.

The region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion comprises individually trackable widespread congestion which propagates upstream such as, for example, the congestion points S_1 , S_2 , S_3 . (The [, of which the] congestion point S_3 , situated [furthest] farthest upstream, represents the last congestion point at the point in time considered.) In this case, the state phase of "congestion point" is understood, as usual, as a structure, moving upstream, of the traffic flow in [the case of] which both congestion point edges move counter to the driving direction. Within the state phase of "congestion point", both the average vehicle speed and the traffic flow are very small. In the course of time a plurality of mutually spaced congestion points S_1 , S_2 , S_3 are frequently formed upstream of the pinch region B_{gs} , which consequently form the region B_{st} , adjoining upstream, of "moving widespread congestion". Between the individual congestion zones S_1 , S_2 ,

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

S3, the traffic state can have the state phase of free traffic and/or synchronized traffic with or without pinch regions. The position $x_{F,st}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,st}$ of the last upstream congestion point S3 forms the transition to the region B_F of free traffic adjoining upstream.

In order to classify the patterns relative to the respective effective bottleneck, the first step in applying the present method is to select all points in the traffic network where effective bottlenecks are located. [After, the] Thereafter, experimental traffic data are used as a basis for allocating either the "complete" pattern or one of the two said "abridged" patterns to each effective bottleneck, depending on the traffic volume in the surroundings of the effective bottleneck. Each of these patterns additionally includes an associated time-dependent and/or location-dependent profile of the various traffic parameters such as, for example, [the] average vehicle speed, the vehicle density, the travel time, etc. These time-dependent and/or location-dependent profiles are determined not only by the pattern, but also by the respective effective bottleneck.

As mentioned above, according to [in the case of] the present traffic monitoring method, the temporal/spatial profile of the pattern of dense traffic, typical of this

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

bottleneck, [of dense traffic] is determined in advance empirically with the aid of appropriate traffic measurements in the region upstream of the respective effective bottleneck, and is stored, in particular with regard to temporal/spatial profiles of the essential traffic parameters considered, such as the average vehicle speed and/or the traffic flow and/or the traffic density. For this purpose, it is established and stored for various values of the influx to the relevant bottleneck whether the pattern relating to the appropriate point in time comprises only the region B_s of synchronized traffic corresponding to Figure 1, the region B_s of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{gs} in accordance with Figure 2, or all three different pattern regions B_s , B_{gs} and B_{st} in accordance with Figure 3. For each of these three pattern variants, the temporal/spatial profile of the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density is assigned and stored.

In addition, the travel time to be expected is preferably determined and stored for each of these three pattern variants for the respective effective bottleneck. Specifically, for each bottleneck and for the various influxes to the relevant bottleneck, the position $x_{s,F}$ of the downstream edge $F_{s,F}$ of the region B_s of synchronized traffic[,] (that is, [to say] the location of the effective bottleneck), the position $x_{gs,s}$ of the

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

edge $F_{GS,S}$ between the region B_S of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{GS} adjoining upstream, and the position $x_{St,GS}$ of the edge $F_{St,GS}$ between the pinch region B_{GS} and the region B_{St} adjoining upstream, of moving widespread congestion are determined as a function of the influx to each of the said edges and stored.

In the current traffic state monitoring operation, after establishing an edge $F_{S,F}$, fixed at an effective bottleneck, between a downstream region B_F of free traffic and a region B_S of synchronized traffic forming upstream, the position $x_{F,S}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ thereof[,] (which in accordance with Figure 1 is adjoined, in turn, by a region B_F of free traffic) is then determined. In addition, the influx to this edge $F_{F,S}$ or [as an alternative to this,] alternatively the influx to the associated effective bottleneck is detected. With the aid of these input data, the best-fitting pattern variant of dense traffic is then selected from the store and used[,] (in particular, the associated temporal/spatial profile of the average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or the traffic density and the associated time-dependent travel time). Starting from the currently selected pattern profile, a prediction of the further development of the pattern is then made with the aid of the continuously determined current position $x_{F,S}$ or the edge $F_{F,S}$ between the region B_S of synchronized traffic and the

region B_F , adjoining upstream, of free traffic, and with the aid of the influxes to the respective bottleneck. This includes, in particular, a prediction as to whether there will form from the initial pattern in accordance with Figure 1 one of the two other pattern variants in accordance with Figures 2 and 3, and/or when and how the pattern of dense traffic will form back again into the state of free traffic at the relevant effective bottleneck.

When, predicted currently or for the future, the pattern of dense traffic at the respective bottleneck also contains the pinch region B_{GS} in accordance with Figure 2, the positions $x_{St,GS}$, $x_{Gs,s}$ of the two edges $F_{St,GS}$, $F_{Gs,s}$ limiting this region B_{GS} are then also determined continuously for this region as, for example, described in [the abovementioned, parallel] German patent [application] document DE 199 44 077 A1, mentioned previously. In addition, the associated influx to the bottleneck [considered] in question is determined, in turn. This output information is then used in turn, to select from the stored pattern profiles that pattern variant and the corresponding temporal/spatial profile of the traffic parameters being considered and of the travel time to be expected from the stored patterns which best fits these input data. On the basis of the selected pattern profile, an improved prediction of the temporal/spatial profile of the

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

traffic parameters considered, such as in particular, the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and the associated time-dependent travel time is then made.

When the [currently present] or the predicted pattern also contains the region B_{St} of moving widespread congestion, the temporal development of the individual congestion points S_1 , S_2 , S_3 there is tracked by means of a method[,] (applied upstream of the upstream edge $F_{St,GS}$ of the pinch region B_{GS}) [,] for dynamic congestion tracking and prediction, as described, for example, in the [abovementioned] above-mentioned German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, and the congestion points are appropriately considered when determining the associated travel time to be expected.

[It is seen that the] The above-described method according to the invention can be used, with a relatively low [computation] computational outlay, to estimate the current [currently estimate the] traffic state upstream of effective bottlenecks even in the case of a relatively large traffic volume, and to [make a prediction for] predict the future by using a pattern recognition process which utilizes the empirically observed fact that a characteristic pattern of dense traffic forms upstream of such effective bottlenecks in

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

the case of a relatively large traffic volume. This pattern comprises at least one region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck upstream, possibly a pinch region adjoining upstream and, in addition, when it is fully expressed, an adjoining region of moving widespread congestion. By using suitable calculating methods, the edges of the individual pattern regions and the respectively associated temporal/spatial profiles of the important traffic parameters representative of the traffic state, such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and traffic density, can be estimated and predicted very reliably. Moreover, this offers the possibility of comparatively reliable predictions of travel time for trips made via such effective bottlenecks.

Whereas the above description of the method considered the case of a pattern of dense traffic forming at an effective bottleneck without influencing further effective bottlenecks, the present method is also suitable for the case of a plurality of effective bottlenecks involved in a pattern of dense traffic, [and this] as will be explained in more detail below. This case arises when the upstream end of a pattern belonging to a first effective bottleneck reaches the position of a second effective bottleneck which is situated closest upstream to the first effective bottleneck. Depending on the development of the pattern of dense traffic, it is possible,

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

in addition to the second effective bottleneck, to incorporate one or more [further] additional consecutive upstream effective bottlenecks[, which are consecutive upstream,] into such an extended pattern of dense traffic. The patterns, extending beyond a plurality of effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic may be denoted as "overarching" patterns of dense traffic, by contrast with the pattern of dense traffic which is to be denoted as an "individual pattern" and contains only [respectively] one effective bottleneck.

The development of such an overarching pattern starts at the point in time in which the upstream end of a first pattern, belonging to the said first, downstream effective bottleneck, reaches the position of the second effective bottleneck, situated closest upstream. Since the production of synchronized traffic from free traffic at each effective bottleneck is a phase transition of "first order" which arises from every interruption of the traffic which is greater than a critical interruption, the occurrence of the upstream end of the first, downstream pattern of dense traffic can trigger this phase transition. This phase transition occurs when, depending on the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, the state of free traffic at the upstream effective bottleneck was already unstable in any case with the result that the occurrence of the upstream end of the pattern, belonging to

the first effective bottleneck, of dense traffic "triggers" the phase transition there. As a result of this phase transition, a region of synchronized traffic or a pinch region is then formed in turn farther upstream of the upstream, second effective bottleneck.

[In the case when] When the pattern[,] of dense traffic occurring at the upstream effective bottleneck [, of dense traffic] is one of the reduced forms shown in Figures 1 and 2, this last-mentioned region combines with the region of synchronized traffic or the pinch region of [said] such pattern [such that] to form an overarching pattern, [is formed] which is regarded as a newly arising pattern jointly assigned to the two effective bottlenecks, and which is developed further in a fashion similar to an "individual" pattern. The development of the overarching pattern[,] (that is, [to say] the temporal and spatial development of the edges of the various pattern regions) [,] is then [in this case] a function of the properties of the two effective bottlenecks incorporated. As in the case of the "individual" pattern, the overarching pattern allocated to the two bottlenecks is stored with the corresponding time-dependent and/or location-dependent profile of the various traffic parameters considered, and is taken into account in the further monitoring and prediction of traffic states.

- 31 -

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

or by means of synchronized traffic or by means of pinch regions.

Since a plurality of regions of moving widespread congestion of various "full" patterns of dense traffic can arise simultaneously in relation to corresponding effective bottlenecks, a plurality of overlaps of the various regions of moving widespread congestion with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions can exist in an overarching pattern. In this case, the congestion points in each region of "moving widespread congestion" always move upstream, and their temporal development can be observed with the aid of one of the [abovementioned] above-mentioned conventional congestion tracking methods, as a result of which it is possible to track the temporal characteristic of the overlaps correspondingly. This information on the temporal variation of the overarching pattern from the movement of the various congestion points is likewise stored as belonging to the overarching pattern of dense traffic, and can be taken into account by appropriately calling up the overarching pattern for a prediction of the traffic in the traffic network considered.

This mode of procedure is based on the finding that congestion points move upstream as self-contained traffic objects by means of the traffic with the state phases of free

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

traffic or synchronized traffic. When, thus, a region of moving widespread congestion of a pattern, belonging to one or more downstream effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic arrives at an upstream effective bottleneck, widespread congestion points thereat easily move further beyond the upstream effective bottleneck. However, when the preconditions required therefor with regard to traffic volume and bottleneck characteristics are fulfilled, they can trigger the phase transition from free to synchronized traffic if no synchronized traffic has yet occurred. This phase transition therefore occurs relatively easily, because the maximum traffic flow beyond the bottleneck in the state of synchronized traffic is lower than in the state of free traffic. Given free traffic with sufficiently high traffic flow, even a relatively small traffic interruption such as is represented, for example, by widespread congestion passing through is enough to "trigger" transition into the state of synchronized traffic.

If, now, a region of moving widespread congestion as upstream region of a "full" individual pattern or as a corresponding subregion of an overarching pattern has reached with its upstream end the upstream [neighbouring] neighboring effective bottleneck and triggered the formation there of synchronized traffic, an individual or overarching pattern

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

having the structures in accordance with Figures 1 to 3 can form in turn upstream of this bottleneck when this is induced by the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, it being possible for this pattern formation to be accomplished or developed further virtually independently of the pattern structure at effective bottlenecks situated downstream.

The production of regions of synchronized traffic or pinch regions and of regions of moving widespread congestion can be understood and detected from the following considerations. In free traffic, the total traffic outflow Q at the cross section of a respective effective bottleneck is the same size on average as the total upstream net traffic influx Q_n to the localization point of the effective bottleneck, taking account of all approach roads and exits in the relevant region. In this case, the localization point of an effective bottleneck is that point where the downstream edge between synchronized traffic, which arises from the existence of this effective bottleneck, and free traffic is localized downstream thereof. In other words, this net traffic influx to the effective bottleneck is the total traffic flow of all vehicles which must be driven through the associated localization point coming from all possible directions. The traffic flow at the cross section of each effective bottleneck is then limited in the state phase of synchronized traffic to

This is the reason why in the state phase of synchronized traffic a pinch region can arise in which these excess vehicles are stored in the typical temporary "narrow" congestion point. The specified criterion $Q_n - Q_{smax} \geq \Delta Q_1$ for a time interval $\Delta t \geq \Delta t_1$ can therefore be used as criterion for the production of the reduced pattern form in accordance with Figure 2, and most accurately when the net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ of synchronized traffic in accordance with Figure 1 for each direction of influx and outflow.

- 35 -

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

minimum time interval Δt_2 being greater than the first minimum time interval ΔQ_1 , it is necessary for yet more excess vehicles to be stored upstream of the localization point of the effective bottleneck, for which reason the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region. In this case, the excess vehicles are stored not only in temporary narrow congestion points, but also in lasting widespread ones. This criterion can therefore be used to detect a formation of the full pattern in accordance with Figure 3, and is at its most exact when the total net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2, "once again for each direction of influx and outflow.

Alternatively, another criterion can be formulated for the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region. This criterion is based on the fact that in a direction "j" of influx or outflow the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region when the total associated net influx $Q_{n,j}$ of this direction "j" in the free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2 is sufficiently large by comparison with the average total flow $Q_{out,j}$ in this direction "j" downstream of narrow congestion points of the pinch region. This alternative criterion points

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

consequently to the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region when the difference $Q_{nj} - Q_{nout,j}$ for a period Δt of at least one associated third minimum period Δt_3 is on average greater than or equal to an associated third excess value ΔQ_3 . In this case, for the three described cases the three minimum periods Δt_1 , Δt_2 , Δt_3 are, just like the three excess values ΔQ_1 , ΔQ_2 , ΔQ_3 for the respective effective bottleneck or for the respective group of effective bottlenecks which are responsible for an overarching pattern are prescribed variables, while the maximum traffic flow Q_{smax} in the synchronized traffic and the average total flow $Q_{nout,j}$ downstream of narrow congestion points of a direction "j" are variables whose values are to be determined from experimental traffic data for each effective bottleneck.

An overarching pattern which can be stored with its temporal and spatial characteristic and can be called up to be used for a traffic prediction can not only arise due to overlaps of regions of moving widespread congestion with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions, and with the movement of the congestion point, but can be realized at least by means of the two following processes.

In a first case, in the course of time the upstream end of a pattern of dense traffic firstly reaches the point of the

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

effective bottleneck next upstream, after which the upstream end of the partial pattern, formed by the last effective bottleneck as upstream part of the further extending overarching pattern, of dense traffic reaches a bottleneck next upstream, etc. This process can last for hours and be predicted, since the development of each individual pattern at each effective bottleneck can be predicted as part of the overarching pattern. The corresponding characteristic of this process of the production and the further temporal and spatial development of the overarching pattern is stored and is available in a fashion which can be called up for a traffic prediction in the traffic network.

As a second case, it can be that the previously described process of the production of an overarching pattern is interrupted by virtue of the fact that the traffic volume in the surroundings of the effective bottleneck next upstream is too low for a pattern of dense traffic to arise there. However, at an effective bottleneck further upstream some moving congestion points can nevertheless once again trigger a pattern, corresponding to this bottleneck, of dense traffic. Because they propagate upstream, the congestion points can be situated at a relatively large distance of, for example, several [kilometres] kilometers upstream of that pattern of dense traffic or of the associated effective bottleneck where

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

they were originally produced in the associated region of moving widespread congestion. They can therefore move independently of the temporal and spatial development of the remainder of the pattern of dense traffic, and can therefore trigger new "full" or "reduced", or else "overarching" patterns at different upstream bottlenecks independently of whether the associated pattern of dense traffic otherwise still exists or not. All these processes can be stored in a fashion which can be called up for a prediction of the production of one or more individual patterns of dense traffic and/or one or more overarching patterns of dense traffic.

It may be remarked that the pattern formation processes described above are not to be understood only in terms of one dimension, but also comprise two-dimensional pattern formation processes in the two-dimensional traffic network by virtue of the fact that, for example, one or more patterns of dense traffic branch off upstream via corresponding approach roads, that is to say extend upstream onto a plurality of route sections of the traffic network, with the result that finally a two-dimensional, branched pattern of dense traffic can form.

Two application examples for the present method are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 in a fashion combined with the method described in the [abovementioned] above-mentioned

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1. Figure 4 shows the classification of the current and future traffic state at a measuring point M of the directional lane 1, for example, of a motorway or motor highway. The traffic intensity $q(t)$ and the average vehicle speed $v(t)$ are measured continuously, that is to say in a time-dependent fashion, at the

measuring point M and fed to a traffic centre for evaluation by a fuzzy logic system. This includes a unit 3 for fuzzifying the input variables, a fuzzy interference system 4 for deriving fuzzy result values by applying prescribable fuzzy rules to the fuzzified input variables, and a unit 5 for defuzzifying the fuzzy result values, that is to say for forming a crisp result value. Exactly one of the values of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic", "pinch region" or "congestion point" is output as a result for the current traffic state of the considered measuring point M, see block 6 in Figure 4. In the case of the use of predicted instead of current values of the traffic intensity $q(t)$ and the average speed $v(t)$ the fuzzy logic system outputs as a result the traffic state at the measuring point M predicted for this future point in time, see block 7 of Figure 4. The mode of procedure in the [abovementioned] above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1, to which reference may be made, is described to this extent.

The present method is based thereon and additionally provides a further-reaching traffic prediction which is based on the prediction information obtained in accordance with block 7 of Figure 4. Specifically, in this case the traffic state is classified in the fashion explained above with regard to the typical pattern of dense traffic for route sections upstream of effective bottlenecks of the traffic network, and the best-fitting pattern is selected from the stored pattern variants and associated profiles when the measuring point M forms an effective bottleneck and dense traffic forms upstream thereof because of a correspondingly large traffic volume, as illustrated by a block 8.

Figure 5 shows a method example which is largely similar to that of Figure 4 and additionally permits the detection of the upstream edge $F_{F,s}$ of a respective region B_s of synchronized traffic even for positions $x_{F,s}$ between two measuring points A, B, including a prediction of this edge position $x_{F,s}$ even in such intermediate regions, see block 9 of Figure 5. It is possible to this extent to refer once more to the description of this functionality in the [abovementioned] above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1. The present method example is based thereon and uses the prediction data, obtained in accordance with block 9, on the extent and position of a respective region B_s of synchronized traffic to

make a further-reaching traffic prediction of the dense traffic forming there and in the region upstream thereof in accordance with the finding explained above and the temporal tracking of the associated typical pattern of dense traffic when the dense traffic is to be ascribed to an effective bottleneck in whose surroundings a downstream edge of the region B_s of synchronized traffic remains fixed. As specified in block 10 of Figure 5, for this purpose the predicted traffic data for this route section are used to select the best-fitting pattern variant of dense traffic from those stored, which is then used for further evaluation purposes and, in particular, for prediction purposes.

It goes without saying that, as explained above, the mode of procedure described above with the aid of Figures 4 and 5 can be used not only to determine current and predict future individual patterns of dense traffic in which only [in each case] one effective bottleneck is involved, but also current or future "overarching" patterns of dense traffic, in which [in each case] a plurality of effective bottlenecks are involved. In [this] the latter case, the method is applied in parallel for the plurality of effective bottlenecks [of a respective] in an overarching pattern. [which are involved.]

Marked Up Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

The foregoing disclosure has been set forth merely to illustrate the invention and is not intended to be limiting. Since modifications of the disclosed embodiments incorporating the spirit and substance of the invention may occur to persons skilled in the art, the invention should be construed to include everything within the scope of the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is related to a method for monitoring and forecasting traffic conditions in a traffic network (particularly a road network) with effective bottlenecks. As used herein, the phrase "effective bottlenecks" is to be understood to include both bottlenecks in the actual sense, (a reduction in the number of usable lanes), and bottlenecks in the broader sense, such as are caused, for example, by one or more incoming feeder lanes, a bend, a grade, a downgrade, a division of a lane into two or more lanes, one or more exits or a bottleneck moving slowly (by comparison with the average vehicle speed in free traffic), for example owing to a vehicle which is being driven slowly.

- 1 -

interest also for diverse telematics applications in vehicles. One aim of these methods is to obtain, from measured traffic data detected at traffic measuring points, a qualitative description of the traffic state at the respective measuring point and its surroundings. Measuring points in this sense include both those installed in a stationary fashion on the route network, and moveable measuring points such as, for example, sample vehicles moving in the traffic (so-called "floating cars") or by a measurement of the traffic flow obtained by means of monitoring from deep space, space or the air.

For the purpose of qualitative description of the traffic state, it is known to divide the latter into various phases, for example into a phase of "free traffic", in which relatively fast vehicles can overtake without a problem, a phase of "synchronized traffic", in which possibilities for overtaking scarcely exist, but a high traffic intensity still prevails, and a phase of "congestion", in the case of which the vehicles are virtually stationary and also the traffic intensity drops to very low values. (See, for example, the journal article by B.S. Kerner and H. Rehborn, "Experimental properties of complexity in traffic flow", Physical Review E 53, R 4275, 1996.) As used herein, "synchronized traffic" is to be understood both as a state in which, because there are

scarcely any possibilities of overtaking, all vehicles in different lanes are driven at a very similar, "synchronized" speed, (for example on route sections without approach roads and exits), and a traffic state in which the distribution of speed for the vehicles in different lanes can differ, but there is a tendency for synchronization of the speeds of those vehicles in different lanes which are respectively being driven on an identical route, since there are scarcely any possibilities of overtaking with reference to one driving route.

The phase division is based on the idea of selecting the phases such that each of them corresponds to specific characteristic properties of the traffic flow, making it possible to estimate the temporal and spatial extent of route sections in which the traffic state is in a specific phase. In the journal article by B.S. Kerner, "Experimental Features of Self-Organization in Traffic Flow", Physical Review Letters, Vol. 81, No. 17, page 3797, so called "pinch regions" (regions of "congested synchronized traffic") are selected in the phase of "synchronized traffic", and are subsequently treated specially. These are regions inside synchronized traffic in which it is possible to drive only at very low speeds and in which there is spontaneous formation of short-lived congestion

states which can migrate upstream and grow in the process, and which can then possibly lead to a lasting congestion state.

Various methods are already known for monitoring and predicting traffic "congestion point". See, for example, the automatic congestion dynamics analysis described in German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, whose content is incorporated herein by reference, and methods known from the literature mentioned there.

In German patent document 198 35 979.9, which is not a prior publication, there is, moreover, a description of the monitoring and forecasting of synchronized traffic, in particular the detection of a phase transition between free and synchronized traffic, and a prediction of the spatial extent of synchronized traffic. This is done by inferring the position of an upstream edge of the latter based on the fact that, at a corresponding upstream measuring point, specific conditions for an induced upstream phase transition from free to synchronized traffic are no longer fulfilled, or widespread congestion has arisen. This method is particularly suitable for detecting the start of a phase of synchronized traffic at an effective bottleneck of the traffic network, and for tracking the temporal development of the synchronized traffic forming upstream of this bottleneck, the downstream edge of

which generally remains fixed at the effective bottleneck. An edge fixed at the effective bottleneck is understood in this case as one which remains in the surroundings of this bottleneck. That is, it remains essentially stationary in the surroundings of a stationary effective bottleneck, or moves along essentially synchronously with a moveable effective bottleneck. The location of the effective bottleneck is therefore the one where the downstream edge of the synchronized traffic is momentarily located.

In a related, co-pending German patent application the current traffic conditions are monitored with regard to different state phases, particularly synchronized traffic and a pinch region as well as the phase transition between states of synchronized traffic on the one hand, and free traffic, on the other hand. The future traffic state is predicted on this basis, if required. In particular, this method can be used to estimate the edges of regions of synchronized traffic relatively accurately for current points in time, or to predict future points in time at which such edges are not (or will not be) located at a measuring point, but somewhere between two measuring points. Suitably designed fuzzy logic is preferably used in this case.

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

In German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1, (not prior art) the current traffic state is monitored with regard to different state phases and, in particular, with regard to synchronized traffic and a pinch region as well as the phase transition between states of synchronized traffic, on the one hand, and free traffic, on the other hand. The future traffic state is predicted on this basis, if required. In particular, this method can be used to estimate the edges of regions of synchronized traffic relatively accurately for current points in time or to predict future points in time at which such edges are not (or will not be) located at a measuring point, but somewhere between two measuring points. A suitably designed fuzzy logic is preferably used in this case.

European patent document EP 0 884 708 A2 discloses a method for predicting traffic conditions in a traffic network having nodes and edges running therebetween. Detection data referring to the current traffic are acquired and transmitted to a control center which uses them to describe the current traffic state on the traffic network in the form of respective traffic phases which represent the state on an edge or an edge section. It predicts the traffic state by calculating at least the movements and future positions of the traffic phases. The phases are described in binary fashion in the form of the phases of "free" and "congested"; in the five phases of

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

"free", "busy", "dense", "sluggish" and "congested"; or by using another number of different phases. For prediction, use is made of phase boundary speeds which, for example, are calculated by linear regression with the aid of current and earlier detection data, or as the quotient of the difference between the incoming and departing flow at the phase boundary and the difference between the vehicle density upstream and downstream of the phase boundary.

One object of the invention is to provide a method for reliably monitoring the current traffic state, specifically even in a region upstream of effective bottlenecks, and for reliably predicting the future traffic state.

This and other objects and a other objects and advantages are achieved by the method according to the invention, in which the traffic state upstream of an effective bottleneck is classified to a particular pattern of dense traffic, whenever an edge fixed at the relevant effective bottleneck is detected between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic (that is, when dense traffic forms upstream of the bottleneck). The pattern classification of the traffic state includes a division of the traffic upstream of the bottleneck into one or more consecutive upstream regions of different state phase composition. Moreover, the pattern classification

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

includes a profile, dependent on state phase, time and location, of traffic parameters taken into account for the state phase determination, such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or traffic density.

In the case of increasing traffic, and specifically at effective bottlenecks (which may be primarily stationary bottlenecks, but in some incidences may include moveable bottlenecks such as very slowly moving road-construction or road-maintenance vehicles or migrating building sites), a formerly free traffic state will frequently be initially transformed into a so-called region of synchronized traffic upstream of the bottleneck, whilst resulting (depending on further traffic) in a pattern, typical of the bottleneck, of dense traffic. In the minimum version, this pattern may comprise only the region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck upstream. The formation of a pinch region is also observed in the case of increasing traffic volume and/or appropriate route infrastructure. Congestion points can develop from this pinch region and propagate upstream, since it is possible for free or synchronized traffic or a pinch region to be present between each two congestion points. The region in which the widespread congestion propagates upstream (by contrast with the localized

congestion occurring in pinch regions) is denoted as a region of "moving widespread congestion".

As a result of these findings, in the case of detection of synchronized traffic moving upstream of a bottleneck the method according to the invention makes it possible to use comparatively fewer current or predicted measured traffic data to assign the traffic state to a fitting pattern typical of the respective bottleneck. Further analysis or evaluation and also prediction of the future traffic state can then be performed on the basis of this pattern recognition with the aid of comparatively little data material which is to be processed, and consequently with correspondingly slight computation outlay. A further essential advantage of this method is that, by contrast with mathematical traffic state models with many parameters to be validated, it includes a pattern-based modeling without parameters to be validated.

One embodiment of the invention permits the pattern classification of the traffic state even when a pattern, arising initially at an effective bottleneck, of dense traffic has extended beyond one or more further, upstream effective bottlenecks. The overarching pattern is built up from the same regions as an individual pattern including only one effective bottleneck. That is, the overarching pattern also comprises

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

the characteristics of regions of "synchronized traffic", "pinch regions" and "moving widespread congestion".

According to a feature of the invention, the pattern determined as a function of time and location for a respective bottleneck is determined empirically from recorded traffic measured data and stored in a fashion which can be called up. As a result, it is possible at any later point in time at which a fixed edge is detected at the bottleneck between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic, to select the pattern profile which best fits the measured traffic data currently recorded or predicted for the relevant point in time from the stored pattern profiles. The latter can be used as a current or predicted traffic state for the corresponding route section of the traffic network upstream of the bottleneck.

In another embodiment of the invention, a dense traffic state upstream of an effective bottleneck is distinguished as a function of vehicle influx in accordance with three pattern variants, and each of the three variants is assigned a corresponding time- and location-dependent pattern profile for one or more of the important traffic parameters of "mean vehicle speed", "traffic flow" and "traffic density". In a first variant, the pattern comprises only one region of

synchronized traffic. In a second variant, the pattern additionally comprises a pinch region adjoining upstream, and in a third pattern variant there is in addition a region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region. The associated, generally time-dependent edge positions between the various pattern regions are determined by respectively suitable methods, for example of the type mentioned at the beginning.

Still another embodiment of the invention permits the detection and tracking of overarching patterns of dense traffic in the considered traffic network as a function of the vehicle flows. In particular, the location and time of the resolution of a respective overarching pattern and the sequence of the individual regions of "synchronized traffic", "pinch region" and "moving widespread congestion" can be determined in each overarching pattern as a function of the vehicle flows. Moreover, the temporal and spatial characteristic of congestion points propagating upstream by means of regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions can be predicted when a region of "moving widespread congestion" overlaps in an overarching pattern with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions.

A further refinement of this measure of determining the edge position includes a temporal tracking of the positions of diverse edges between the various pattern regions and/or congestion points in overarching patterns and/or the detection of newly occurring overarching patterns, so that the position and extent of each of the regions (which differ in their state phase composition) of an individual or overarching pattern can be tracked in temporal development.

In still another embodiment of the invention, the expected travel time required for traversing the route section in which the individual or overarching pattern of the dense traffic is located is additionally determined as a function of time and stored. The stored travel time information can be used, for example, directly within the framework of a method for estimating travel times, currently to be expected or to be expected in future for prediction, for travelling specific, prescribable routes of the traffic network.

Finally, according to still another embodiment of the invention, the positions of associated edges and the influx to the pattern are detected currently after detection of an individual or overarching pattern. This information is used to select the pattern profile which best fits therewith from the stored pattern profiles, and to carry out a prediction on the

further development of the pattern of dense traffic at the relevant effective bottleneck. This can comprise, in particular, a prediction of relevant traffic state parameters such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or traffic density and, if required, also be travel time to be expected.

Other objects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a diagram which shows a route section of a road traffic network with an effective bottleneck, and an upstream pattern of dense traffic, which comprises a region of synchronized traffic;

Figure 2 is an illustration similar to Figure 1, but for a pattern of dense traffic which also includes a pinch region;

Figure 3 is an illustration includes a region of moving widespread congestion;

Figure 4 is a diagram which shows a determination of current and future traffic states at a measuring point for the purpose of monitoring and predicting traffic states including patterns of dense traffic upstream of bottlenecks; and

Figure 5 shows a view corresponding to Figure 4, but for the case of an edge, situated between two measuring points, between free and synchronized traffic.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows an example of a route section of a directional lane of a road traffic network (for example, a motorway section) whose traffic state is estimated by a traffic center for the current point in time. (That is, it is determined by computer, and is predicted for future points in time.) Permanently installed and/or moveable measuring points are provided, as required, in order to detect measured traffic data serving this purpose. The measured data are received as appropriate by the traffic center and appropriately evaluated by a computation unit there. Such traffic state monitoring systems are discussed, for example, in the literature referred to previously.

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

The present traffic state monitoring system utilizes a monitoring method that includes detection of typical pattern profiles of dense traffic upstream of effective bottlenecks and classification of the same. This information makes it possible to estimate the current traffic state comparatively easily and reliably, and also to predict the traffic state to be expected in future in this route region.

Figure 1 shows an example in which an effective bottleneck is located at a route position $x_{S,F}$. Due to correspondingly high traffic volume, an edge $F_{S,F}$ fixed there has formed between a downstream region B_F of free traffic and an upstream region B_S of synchronized traffic. The formation of such an edge $F_{S,F}$ can be detected, for example, with the aid of the method described in German patent document 198 90 35 979.9, referred to previously. In this case, it can be a spatially fixed bottleneck such as, for example, a permanent lane reduction at this point; but it may also be a moveable bottleneck, as formed, for example, by a "migrating building site" or very slowly moving road-construction vehicles.

Upon detection of such a fixed edge $F_{S,F}$ between downstream free traffic B_F and upstream synchronized traffic B_S , the method then classifies the traffic state upstream of the effective bottleneck into a pattern of dense traffic,

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

using the experimentally observed fact that in increased traffic volume, entirely typical pattern profiles of dense traffic form upstream of such effective bottlenecks. That is, the traffic state there can be classified into certain typical variants of a pattern of dense traffic.

Treating the traffic state in this region as a pattern of dense traffic then permits a comparatively reliable prediction of the future traffic state and of the travel time required to traverse this region with a relatively low computational outlay and relatively few items of measured data information. For this purpose, a specific pattern of the dense traffic is assigned upstream of the respective effective bottleneck, in particular at all points with approach roads, on the basis of measurements of the traffic (that is, measurements of traffic parameters representative the traffic state). Such a pattern of dense traffic includes appropriate time-dependent and location-dependent profiles of the considered traffic parameters such as the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and preferably also the travel time corresponding to the pattern respectively present. It should be noted that these temporal/spatial profiles of the pattern of dense traffic deviate clearly, by more than a prescribed measure, from the corresponding profiles of free traffic. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the

respective temporal/spatial profiles, assigned to the pattern of dense traffic, of the traffic parameters which are considered (such as the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density), and the travel time belonging to the pattern, have characteristic properties in the case of each effective bottleneck. These properties are characteristic in the sense that they can be reproduced and predicted for different times, for example different times of day and/or different days. That is, these characteristic properties, including their characteristic time dependence, can be predicted without validating the parameters of a traffic prediction model used.

As has been said, in the example of Figure 1 the pattern of dense traffic comprises solely the region B_s of synchronized traffic with a downstream edge $F_{s,F}$ at the location $x_{s,F}$ of the effective bottleneck and an upstream edge $F_{F,s}$, whose position $x_{F,s}$ is determined by measurement and computation and is tracked for its temporal development. The upstream edge $F_{F,s}$ is adjoined upstream by a further region B_F of free traffic.

A further, typically occurring variant of the pattern of dense traffic is illustrated in Figure 2 and includes, in addition to the region B_s of synchronized traffic, a pinch region B_{Gs} adjoining upstream at the upstream edge $F_{Gs,s}$

thereof. In such a pinch region (that is, congested synchronized traffic), narrow congestion points arise in otherwise synchronized traffic, but they are not individually tracked. Division of the traffic state into the phases of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic" with or without "pinch regions" and "congestion point", are described, for example, in the above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1 in which suitable measures are also specified for temporal tracking of the position $x_{GS,S}$ of the downstream edge $F_{GS,S}$, and the position $x_{F,GS}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$, at which a region B_F of free traffic adjoins upstream in turn.

Given an appropriately large traffic volume and/or an appropriate route infrastructure, a pattern of dense traffic as illustrated in Figure 3 can be formed as a further, fully expressed variant. In addition to the region B_S of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{GS} adjoining upstream thereof, this comprises a region B_{St} (adjoining upstream thereof) of moving widespread congestion which is finally adjoined upstream again by a region B_F of free traffic. In other words, the presently classified pattern of dense traffic upstream of an effective bottleneck generally comprises the three regions, occurring consecutively upstream: of synchronized traffic B_S , congested synchronized traffic (pinch region) B_{GS} and moving widespread congestion B_{St} .

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

Figures 2 and 1 show reduced forms in which the region B_{st} of "moving widespread congestion" and, additionally, the pinch region B_{gs} are lacking, such as is the case, in particular, in the starting phase of the complete pattern of Figure 3. In other words, the complete pattern according to Figure 3 is formed upstream of an effective bottleneck, typically in the sequence of Figures 1 to 3, because the region B_s of synchronized traffic firstly arises at the effective bottleneck. The pinch region B_{gs} and possibly also the region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion are then formed upstream of the region B_s when the traffic volume remains sufficiently large and/or is permitted by the infrastructure of the corresponding route section.

The region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion comprises individually trackable widespread congestion which propagates upstream such as, for example, the congestion points S_1 , S_2 , S_3 . (The congestion point S_3 , situated farthest upstream, represents the last congestion point at the point in time considered.) In this case, the state phase of "congestion point" is understood, as usual, as a structure, moving upstream, of the traffic flow in which both congestion point edges move counter to the driving direction. Within the state phase of "congestion point", both the average vehicle speed and the traffic flow are very small. In the course of time a

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

plurality of mutually spaced congestion points S_1 , S_2 , S_3 are frequently formed upstream of the pinch region B_{GS} , which consequently form the region B_{St} , adjoining upstream, of "moving widespread congestion". Between the individual congestion zones S_1 , S_2 , S_3 , the traffic state can have the state phase of free traffic and/or synchronized traffic with or without pinch regions. The position $x_{F,St}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,St}$ of the last upstream congestion point S_3 forms the transition to the region B_F of free traffic adjoining upstream.

In order to classify the patterns relative to the respective effective bottleneck, the first step in applying the present method is to select all points in the traffic network where effective bottlenecks are located. Thereafter, experimental traffic data are used as a basis for allocating either the "complete" pattern or one of the two said "abridged" patterns to each effective bottleneck, depending on the traffic volume in the surroundings of the effective bottleneck. Each of these patterns additionally includes an associated time-dependent and/or location-dependent profile of the various traffic parameters such as, for example, average vehicle speed, the vehicle density, the travel time, etc. These time-dependent and/or location-dependent profiles are determined not only by the pattern, but also by the respective effective bottleneck.

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

As mentioned above, according to the present traffic monitoring method, the temporal/spatial profile of the pattern of dense traffic, typical of this bottleneck, is determined in advance empirically with the aid of appropriate traffic measurements in the region upstream of the respective effective bottleneck, and is stored, in particular with regard to temporal/spatial profiles of the essential traffic parameters considered, such as the average vehicle speed and/or the traffic flow and/or the traffic density. For this purpose, it is established and stored for various values of the influx to the relevant bottleneck whether the pattern relating to the appropriate point in time comprises only the region B_s of synchronized traffic corresponding to Figure 1, the region B_s of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{gs} in accordance with Figure 2, or all three different pattern regions B_s , B_{gs} and B_{st} in accordance with Figure 3. For each of these three pattern variants, the temporal/spatial profile of the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density is assigned and stored.

In addition, the travel time to be expected is preferably determined and stored for each of these three pattern variants for the respective effective bottleneck. Specifically, for each bottleneck and for the various influxes to the relevant

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

bottleneck, the position $x_{S,F}$ of the downstream edge $F_{S,F}$ of the region B_S of synchronized traffic (that is, the location of the effective bottleneck), the position $x_{GS,S}$ of the edge $F_{GS,S}$ between the region B_S of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{GS} adjoining upstream, and the position $x_{St,GS}$ of the edge $F_{St,GS}$ between the pinch region B_{GS} and the region B_{St} adjoining upstream, of moving widespread congestion are determined as a function of the influx to each of the said edges and stored.

In the current traffic state monitoring operation, after establishing an edge $F_{S,F}$, fixed at an effective bottleneck, between a downstream region B_F of free traffic and a region B_S of synchronized traffic forming upstream, the position $x_{F,S}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ thereof (which in accordance with Figure 1 is adjoined, in turn, by a region B_F of free traffic) is then determined. In addition, the influx to this edge $F_{F,S}$, or alternatively the influx to the associated effective bottleneck is detected. With the aid of these input data, the best-fitting pattern variant of dense traffic is then selected from the store and used (in particular, the associated temporal/spatial profile of the average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or the traffic density and the associated time-dependent travel time). Starting from the currently selected pattern profile, a prediction of the further development of

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the pattern is then made with the aid of the continuously determined current position $x_{F,s}$ or the edge $F_{F,s}$ between the region B_s of synchronized traffic and the region B_F , adjoining upstream, of free traffic, and with the aid of the influxes to the respective bottleneck. This includes, in particular, a prediction as to whether there will form from the initial pattern in accordance with Figure 1 one of the two other pattern variants in accordance with Figures 2 and 3, and/or when and how the pattern of dense traffic will form back again into the state of free traffic at the relevant effective bottleneck.

When, predicted currently or for the future, the pattern of dense traffic at the respective bottleneck also contains the pinch region B_{GS} in accordance with Figure 2, the positions $x_{St,GS}$, $x_{GS,s}$ of the two edges $F_{St,GS}$, $F_{GS,s}$ limiting this region B_{GS} are then also determined continuously for this region as, for example, described in German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1, mentioned previously. In addition, the associated influx to the bottleneck in question is determined, in turn. This output information is then used in turn, to select from the stored pattern profiles that pattern variant and the corresponding temporal/spatial profile of the traffic parameters being considered and of the travel time to be expected from the stored patterns which best fits these input data. On the basis

of the selected pattern profile, an improved prediction of the temporal/spatial profile of the traffic parameters considered, such as in particular, the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and the associated time-dependent travel time is then made.

When the or the predicted pattern also contains the region B_{St} of moving widespread congestion, the temporal development of the individual congestion points $S1$, $S2$, $S3$ there is tracked by means of a method (applied upstream of the upstream edge $F_{St,GS}$ of the pinch region B_{GS}) for dynamic congestion tracking and prediction, as described, for example, in the above-mentioned German patent document DE 196 47 127 A1, and the congestion points are appropriately considered when determining the associated travel time to be expected.

The above-described method according to the invention can be used, with a relatively low computational outlay, to estimate the current traffic state upstream of effective bottlenecks even in the case of a relatively large traffic volume, and to predict the future by using a pattern recognition process which utilizes the empirically observed fact that a characteristic pattern of dense traffic forms upstream of such effective bottlenecks in the case of a relatively large traffic volume. This pattern comprises at

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

least one region of synchronized traffic adjoining the effective bottleneck upstream, possibly a pinch region adjoining upstream and, in addition, when it is fully expressed, an adjoining region of moving widespread congestion. By using suitable calculating methods, the edges of the individual pattern regions and the respectively associated temporal/spatial profiles of the important traffic parameters representative of the traffic state, such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and traffic density, can be estimated and predicted very reliably. Moreover, this offers the possibility of comparatively reliable predictions of travel time for trips made via such effective bottlenecks.

Whereas the above description of the method considered the case of a pattern of dense traffic forming at an effective bottleneck without influencing further effective bottlenecks, the present method is also suitable for the case of a plurality of effective bottlenecks involved in a pattern of dense traffic, as will be explained in more detail below. This case arises when the upstream end of a pattern belonging to a first effective bottleneck reaches the position of a second effective bottleneck which is situated closest upstream to the first effective bottleneck. Depending on the development of the pattern of dense traffic, it is possible, in addition to the second effective bottleneck, to incorporate one or more

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

additional consecutive upstream effective bottlenecks into such an extended pattern of dense traffic. The patterns, extending beyond a plurality of effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic may be denoted as "overarching" patterns of dense traffic, by contrast with the pattern of dense traffic which is to be denoted as an "individual pattern" and contains only one effective bottleneck.

The development of such an overarching pattern starts at the point in time in which the upstream end of a first pattern, belonging to the said first, downstream effective bottleneck, reaches the position of the second effective bottleneck, situated closest upstream. Since the production of synchronized traffic from free traffic at each effective bottleneck is a phase transition of "first order" which arises from every interruption of the traffic which is greater than a critical interruption, the occurrence of the upstream end of the first, downstream pattern of dense traffic can trigger this phase transition. This phase transition occurs when, depending on the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, the state of free traffic at the upstream effective bottleneck was already unstable in any case with the result that the occurrence of the upstream end of the pattern, belonging to the first effective bottleneck, of dense traffic "triggers" the phase transition there. As a result of this phase

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

transition, a region of synchronized traffic or a pinch region is then formed in turn farther upstream of the upstream, second effective bottleneck.

When the pattern of dense traffic occurring at the upstream effective bottleneck is one of the reduced forms shown in Figures 1 and 2, this last-mentioned region combines with the region of synchronized traffic or the pinch region of such pattern to form an overarching pattern, which is regarded as a newly arising pattern jointly assigned to the two effective bottlenecks, and which is developed further in a fashion similar to an "individual" pattern. The development of the overarching pattern (that is, the temporal and spatial development of the edges of the various pattern regions) is then a function of the properties of the two effective bottlenecks incorporated. As in the case of the "individual" pattern, the overarching pattern allocated to the two bottlenecks is stored with the corresponding time-dependent and/or location-dependent profile of the various traffic parameters considered, and is taken into account in the further monitoring and prediction of traffic states.

The procedure outlined for incorporating an effective bottleneck which is respectively next upstream, which is achieved by a downstream pattern of dense traffic, is carried

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

out upstream successively for all effective bottlenecks from one effective bottleneck to the next. It is possible thereby to allocate to a traffic network one or more overarching patterns which in some cases can achieve a substantial extension of, for example, several tens or even hundreds of kilometers. Each overarching pattern comprises a sequence of complete individual patterns corresponding to Figure 3 and/or reduced patterns corresponding to Figures 1 and 2. Moreover, an overarching pattern can also have a form in which a region of "moving widespread congestion", which has arisen in a pattern, situated downstream, of dense traffic, overlaps with a region of synchronized traffic and/or a pinch region in a pattern, situated upstream, of dense traffic. This is possible by virtue of the fact that moving widespread congestion passes through freely upstream both by means of synchronized traffic and by means of pinch regions. Moreover, the speed of the downstream edge of each instance of moving widespread congestion is a characteristic quantity whose mean value does not depend on whether an instance of moving widespread congestion passes through by means of free traffic or by means of synchronized traffic or by means of pinch regions.

Since a plurality of regions of moving widespread congestion of various "full" patterns of dense traffic can arise simultaneously in relation to corresponding effective

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

bottlenecks, a plurality of overlaps of the various regions of moving widespread congestion with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions can exist in an overarching pattern. In this case, the congestion points in each region of "moving widespread congestion" always move upstream, and their temporal development can be observed with the aid of one of the above-mentioned conventional congestion tracking methods, as a result of which it is possible to track the temporal characteristic of the overlaps correspondingly. This information on the temporal variation of the overarching pattern from the movement of the various congestion points is likewise stored as belonging to the overarching pattern of dense traffic, and can be taken into account by appropriately calling up the overarching pattern for a prediction of the traffic in the traffic network considered.

This mode of procedure is based on the finding that congestion points move upstream as self-contained traffic objects by means of the traffic with the state phases of free traffic or synchronized traffic. When, thus, a region of moving widespread congestion of a pattern, belonging to one or more downstream effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic arrives at an upstream effective bottleneck, widespread congestion points thereat easily move further beyond the upstream effective bottleneck. However, when the preconditions

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

required therefor with regard to traffic volume and bottleneck characteristics are fulfilled, they can trigger the phase transition from free to synchronized traffic if no synchronized traffic has yet occurred. This phase transition therefore occurs relatively easily, because the maximum traffic flow beyond the bottleneck in the state of synchronized traffic is lower than in the state of free traffic. Given free traffic with sufficiently high traffic flow, even a relatively small traffic interruption such as is represented, for example, by widespread congestion passing through is enough to "trigger" transition into the state of synchronized traffic.

If, now, a region of moving widespread congestion as upstream region of a "full" individual pattern or as a corresponding subregion of an overarching pattern has reached with its upstream end the upstream neighboring effective bottleneck and triggered the formation there of synchronized traffic, an individual or overarching pattern having the structures in accordance with Figures 1 to 3 can form in turn upstream of this bottleneck when this is induced by the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, it being possible for this pattern formation to be accomplished or developed further virtually independently of the pattern structure at effective bottlenecks situated downstream.

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

The production of regions of synchronized traffic or pinch regions and of regions of moving widespread congestion can be understood and detected from the following considerations. In free traffic, the total traffic outflow Q at the cross section of a respective effective bottleneck is the same size on average as the total upstream net traffic influx Q_n to the localization point of the effective bottleneck, taking account of all approach roads and exits in the relevant region. In this case, the localization point of an effective bottleneck is that point where the downstream edge between synchronized traffic, which arises from the existence of this effective bottleneck, and free traffic is localized downstream thereof. In other words, this net traffic influx to the effective bottleneck is the total traffic flow of all vehicles which must be driven through the associated localization point coming from all possible directions. The traffic flow at the cross section of each effective bottleneck is then limited in the state phase of synchronized traffic to a certain maximum traffic flow Q_{smax} which drops with a rising proportion of lorries in the traffic flow. Consequently if during a period Δt greater than a certain first minimum period Δt_1 the net traffic influx Q_n is on average more than a certain first excess value ΔQ_1 above the maximum traffic flow Q_{smax} of the state phase of synchronized traffic, the "excess"

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

vehicles, whose number is yielded as appropriate time integral over the flow difference, must be "stored" upstream of the localization point of the effective bottleneck.

This is the reason why in the state phase of synchronized traffic a pinch region can arise in which these excess vehicles are stored in the typical temporary "narrow" congestion point. The specified criterion $Q_n - Q_{smax} \geq \Delta Q_1$ for a time interval $\Delta t \geq \Delta t_1$ can therefore be used as criterion for the production of the reduced pattern form in accordance with Figure 2, and most accurately when the net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,S}$ of synchronized traffic in accordance with Figure 1 for each direction of influx and outflow.

When the difference $Q_n - Q_{smax}$ is on average above a second excess value ΔQ_2 during a period Δt greater than or equal to a second minimum period Δt_2 , the second excess value ΔQ_2 being greater than the first excess value ΔQ_1 and/or the second minimum time interval Δt_2 being greater than the first minimum time interval Δt_1 , it is necessary for yet more excess vehicles to be stored upstream of the localization point of the effective bottleneck, for which reason the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region. In this case, the excess vehicles are stored not only in

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

temporary narrow congestion points, but also in lasting widespread ones. This criterion can therefore be used to detect a formation of the full pattern in accordance with Figure 3, and is at its most exact when the total net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2, once again for each direction of influx and outflow.

Alternatively, another criterion can be formulated for the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region. This criterion is based on the fact that in a direction "j" of influx or outflow the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region when the total associated net influx Q_{nj} of this direction "j" in the free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2 is sufficiently large by comparison with the average total flow $Q_{nout,j}$ in this direction "j" downstream of narrow congestion points of the pinch region. This alternative criterion points consequently to the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region when the difference $Q_{nj} - Q_{nout,j}$ for a period Δt of at least one associated third minimum period Δt_3 is on average greater than or equal to an associated third excess value ΔQ_3 . In this case, for the three described cases the three minimum periods Δt_1 , Δt_2 , Δt_3

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

are, just like the three excess values ΔQ_1 , ΔQ_2 , ΔQ_3 for the respective effective bottleneck or for the respective group of effective bottlenecks which are responsible for an overarching pattern are prescribed variables, while the maximum traffic flow Q_{smax} in the synchronized traffic and the average total flow $Q_{nout,j}$ downstream of narrow congestion points of a direction "j" are variables whose values are to be determined from experimental traffic data for each effective bottleneck.

An overarching pattern which can be stored with its temporal and spatial characteristic and can be called up to be used for a traffic prediction can not only arise due to overlaps of regions of moving widespread congestion with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions, and with the movement of the congestion point, but can be realized at least by means of the two following processes.

In a first case, in the course of time the upstream end of a pattern of dense traffic firstly reaches the point of the effective bottleneck next upstream, after which the upstream end of the partial pattern, formed by the last effective bottleneck as upstream part of the further extending overarching pattern, of dense traffic reaches a bottleneck next upstream, etc. This process can last for hours and be predicted, since the development of each individual pattern at

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

each effective bottleneck can be predicted as part of the overarching pattern. The corresponding characteristic of this process of the production and the further temporal and spatial development of the overarching pattern is stored and is available in a fashion which can be called up for a traffic prediction in the traffic network.

As a second case, it can be that the previously described process of the production of an overarching pattern is interrupted by virtue of the fact that the traffic volume in the surroundings of the effective bottleneck next upstream is too low for a pattern of dense traffic to arise there. However, at an effective bottleneck further upstream some moving congestion points can nevertheless once again trigger a pattern, corresponding to this bottleneck, of dense traffic. Because they propagate upstream, the congestion points can be situated at a relatively large distance of, for example, several kilometers upstream of that pattern of dense traffic or of the associated effective bottleneck where they were originally produced in the associated region of moving widespread congestion. They can therefore move independently of the temporal and spatial development of the remainder of the pattern of dense traffic, and can therefore trigger new "full" or "reduced", or else "overarching" patterns at different upstream bottlenecks independently of whether the

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

associated pattern of dense traffic otherwise still exists or not. All these processes can be stored in a fashion which can be called up for a prediction of the production of one or more individual patterns of dense traffic and/or one or more overarching patterns of dense traffic.

It may be remarked that the pattern formation processes described above are not to be understood only in terms of one dimension, but also comprise two-dimensional pattern formation processes in the two-dimensional traffic network by virtue of the fact that, for example, one or more patterns of dense traffic branch off upstream via corresponding approach roads, that is to say extend upstream onto a plurality of route sections of the traffic network, with the result that finally a two-dimensional, branched pattern of dense traffic can form.

Two application examples for the present method are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 in a fashion combined with the method described in the above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1. Figure 4 shows the classification of the current and future traffic state at a measuring point M of the directional lane 1, for example, of a motorway or motor highway. The traffic intensity $q(t)$ and the average vehicle speed $v(t)$ are measured continuously, that is to say in a time-dependent fashion, at the measuring point M and fed to a

Clean Version of Substitute Specification
Attorney Docket No. 225/50974

traffic centre for evaluation by a fuzzy logic system. This includes a unit 3 for fuzzifying the input variables, a fuzzy interference system 4 for deriving fuzzy result values by applying prescribable fuzzy rules to the fuzzified input variables, and a unit 5 for defuzzifying the fuzzy result values, that is to say for forming a crisp result value. Exactly one of the values of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic", "pinch region" or "congestion point" is output as a result for the current traffic state of the considered measuring point M, see block 6 in Figure 4. In the case of the use of predicted instead of current values of the traffic intensity $q(t)$ and the average speed $v(t)$ the fuzzy logic system outputs as a result the traffic state at the measuring point M predicted for this future point in time, see block 7 of Figure 4. The mode of procedure in the above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1, to which reference may be made, is described to this extent.

The present method is based thereon and additionally provides a further-reaching traffic prediction which is based on the prediction information obtained in accordance with block 7 of Figure 4. Specifically, in this case the traffic state is classified in the fashion explained above with regard to the typical pattern of dense traffic for route sections upstream of effective bottlenecks of the traffic network, and

the best-fitting pattern is selected from the stored pattern variants and associated profiles when the measuring point M forms an effective bottleneck and dense traffic forms upstream thereof because of a correspondingly large traffic volume, as illustrated by a block 8.

Figure 5 shows a method example which is largely similar to that of Figure 4 and additionally permits the detection of the upstream edge $F_{F,s}$ of a respective region B_s of synchronized traffic even for positions $x_{F,s}$ between two measuring points A, B, including a prediction of this edge position $x_{F,s}$ even in such intermediate regions, see block 9 of Figure 5. It is possible to this extent to refer once more to the description of this functionality in the above-mentioned German patent document DE 199 44 077 A1. The present method example is based thereon and uses the prediction data, obtained in accordance with block 9, on the extent and position of a respective region B_s of synchronized traffic to make a further-reaching traffic prediction of the dense traffic forming there and in the region upstream thereof in accordance with the finding explained above and the temporal tracking of the associated typical pattern of dense traffic when the dense traffic is to be ascribed to an effective bottleneck in whose surroundings a downstream edge of the region B_s of synchronized traffic remains fixed. As specified in block 10 of Figure 5, for this

purpose the predicted traffic data for this route section are used to select the best-fitting pattern variant of dense traffic from those stored, which is then used for further evaluation purposes and, in particular, for prediction purposes.

It goes without saying that, as explained above, the mode of procedure described above with the aid of Figures 4 and 5 can be used not only to determine current and predict future individual patterns of dense traffic in which only one effective bottleneck is involved, but also current or future "overarching" patterns of dense traffic, in which a plurality of effective bottlenecks are involved. In the latter case, the method is applied in parallel for the plurality of effective bottlenecks in an overarching pattern.

The foregoing disclosure has been set forth merely to illustrate the invention and is not intended to be limiting. Since modifications of the disclosed embodiments incorporating the spirit and substance of the invention may occur to persons skilled in the art, the invention should be construed to include everything within the scope of the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

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Method for monitoring traffic state for a traffic
network with effective bottlenecks

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The invention is related to a method for monitoring,
including predicting the traffic state in a traffic
network with effective bottlenecks, in particular in a
corresponding road traffic network, according to the
10 preamble of Claim 1. In this case, effective
bottlenecks are to be understood both as bottlenecks in
the actual sense, that is to say a reduction in the
number of usable lanes, and bottlenecks in the wider
sense which, for example, are caused by one or more
15 incoming feeder lanes or by a bend, a grade, a
downgrade, a division of a lane into two or more lanes,
one or more exits or a bottleneck moving slowly (by
comparison with the average vehicle speed in free
traffic), for example owing to a vehicle which is being
20 driven slowly.

Methods for monitoring and predicting the traffic state
in a traffic network, for example a road traffic
network, are variously known and of particular interest
25 also for diverse telematics applications in vehicles.
One aim of these methods is to obtain from the traffic
measured data detected at traffic measuring points a
qualitative description of the traffic state at the
respective measuring point and its surroundings.
30 Measuring points in this sense are presently both
measuring points installed in a stationary fashion on
the route network side, and moveable measuring points
such as are represented, for example, by sample
vehicles floating along in the traffic (so-called
35 "floating cars") or by a measurement of the traffic
flow obtained by means of monitoring from deep space,
space or the air.

For the purpose of qualitative description of the traffic state, it is known to divide the latter into various phases, for example into a phase of "free traffic", in the case of which relatively fast vehicles can overtake without a problem, a phase of "synchronized traffic", in the case of which possibilities for overtaking scarcely exist, but a high traffic intensity still prevails, and a phase of "congestion", in the case of which the vehicles are virtually stationary and also the traffic intensity drops to very low values - see, for example, the journal article by B.S. Kerner and H. Rehborn, "Experimental properties of complexity in traffic flow", Physical Review E 53, R 4275, 1996. In this case, the phase of synchronized traffic is to be understood both as a state in the case of which, owing to the fact that there are scarcely any possibilities of overtaking in this phase, all vehicles in different lanes are driven at a very similar, "synchronized" speed, as is, for example, the case in particular on route sections without approach roads and exits, a traffic state in the case of which the distribution of speed for the vehicles in different lanes can still differ, but there is a tendency for synchronization of the speeds of those vehicles in different lanes which are respectively being driven on an identical route, since there are scarcely any possibilities of overtaking with reference to one driving route. The phase division is based on the idea of selecting the phases such that each of them corresponds to specific characteristic properties of the traffic flow, such that it is possible to estimate the temporal and spatial extent of route sections in which the traffic state is in a specific phase. In the journal article by B.S. Kerner, "Experimental Features of Self-Organization in Traffic Flow", Physical Review Letters, Vol. 81, No. 17, page 3797, so called "pinch regions"

(regions of "congested synchronized traffic") are selected in the phase of "synchronized traffic", and are subsequently treated specially. These are regions inside synchronized traffic in which it is possible to drive only at very low speeds and in which there is spontaneous formation of short-lived congestion states which can migrate upstream and grow in the process, and which can then possibly lead to a lasting congestion state.

10 Various methods are already known for monitoring and
predicting the traffic state "congestion point" -see
the automatic congestion dynamics analysis described in
Laid-Open Application DE 196 47 127 A1, whose content
15 is incorporated herein by reference, and methods known
from the literature mentioned there.

In the older German Patent Application No. 198 35 979.9, which is not a prior publication and
20 whose content is incorporated herein by reference, there is, moreover, a description of the monitoring and prediction of synchronized traffic, in particular the detection of the phase transition between free and synchronized traffic, and a prediction of the spatial
25 extent of synchronized traffic by inferring the position of the upstream edge of the latter by virtue of the fact that for a corresponding upstream measuring point specific conditions for an induced upstream phase transition from free to synchronized traffic are no
30 longer fulfilled, or widespread congestion has arisen. This method is particularly suitable for detecting the start of a phase of synchronized traffic at an effective bottleneck of the traffic network, and for tracking the temporal development of the synchronized
35 traffic forming upstream of this bottleneck, the downstream edge of which generally remains fixed at the effective bottleneck. An edge fixed at the effective bottleneck is understood in this case as one which

remains in the surroundings of this bottleneck, that is to say remains essentially stationary in the surroundings of a stationary effective bottleneck, or moves along essentially synchronously with a moveable effective bottleneck. The location of the effective bottleneck is therefore the one where the downstream edge of the synchronized traffic is momentarily located.

10 In a German patent application (our file P032254/DE/1)
submitted in parallel, whose content is incorporated
herein by reference, there is a description of a
traffic, state monitoring method in the case of which
the current traffic state is monitored with regard to
15 different state phases and, in particular, with regard
to synchronized traffic and a pinch region as well as
the phase transition between states of synchronized
traffic, on the one hand, and free traffic, on the
other hand, and the future traffic state is predicted
20 on this basis, if required. In particular, this method
can be used to estimate the edges of regions of
synchronized traffic relatively accurately for current
points in time or to predict for future points in time
at which said edges are not or will not be located at a
25 measuring point, but somewhere between two measuring
points. A suitably designed fuzzy logic is preferably
used in this case.

As a technical problem, the invention is based on the provision of a method of the type mentioned at the beginning with the aid of which the current traffic state can be monitored comparatively reliably specifically even in the region upstream of effective bottlenecks, and a comparatively reliable prediction of the future traffic state is also possible on this basis, if required.

P032734/DE/1

- 6 -

points. The region in which the widespread congestion propagating upstream (by contrast with the localized congestion occurring in pinch regions) is situated is denoted as a region of "moving widespread congestion".

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As a result of these findings, in the case of detection of synchronized traffic moving upstream of a bottleneck it is possible by means of the method according to the invention to use comparatively fewer current or
10 predicted measured traffic data to assign the traffic state to a fitting pattern typical of the respective bottleneck. The further analysis or evaluation and, specifically, also the prediction of the traffic state to be expected in future can then be performed on the
15 basis of this pattern recognition with the aid of comparatively little data material which is to be processed, and consequently with correspondingly slight computation outlay. A further essential advantage of this method consists in that, by contrast with
20 mathematical traffic state models with many parameters which are to be validated, it includes a pattern-based modelling without parameters to be validated.

A method developed according to Claim 2 permits the
25 pattern classification of the traffic state even for the case in which a pattern, arising initially at an effective bottleneck, of dense traffic has extended beyond one or more further, upstream effective bottlenecks. It is seen that the pattern classification
30 is also possible for this case, and the overarching pattern is built up from the same regions as an individual pattern including only one effective bottleneck, that is to say the overarching pattern also comprises the characteristics of regions of
35 "synchronized traffic", "pinch regions" and "moving widespread congestion".

P032734/DE/1

- 9 -

individual or overarching pattern. This information is used to select the pattern profile which best fits therewith from the stored pattern profiles, and to carry out a prediction on the further development of the pattern of dense traffic at the relevant effective bottleneck. This can comprise, in particular, a prediction of relevant traffic state parameters such as average vehicle speed, traffic flow and/or traffic density and, if required, also be travel time to be expected.

Advantageous embodiments of the invention are illustrated in the drawings and described below. In the drawings:

Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic illustration of a route section of a road traffic network with an effective bottleneck, and of an upstream pattern of dense traffic, which comprises a region of synchronized traffic,

Figure 2 shows an illustration according to Figure 1, but for a pattern of dense traffic which additionally includes a pinch region,

Figure 3 shows an illustration according to Figure 2, but for a pattern of dense traffic which additionally includes a region of moving widespread congestion,

Figure 4 shows a diagrammatic illustration of a determination of current and future traffic states at a measuring point for the purpose of monitoring and predicting traffic states including patterns of dense traffic upstream of bottlenecks, and

P032734/DE/1

- 10 -

Figure 5 shows a view corresponding to Figure 4, but
for the case of an edge, situated
between two measuring points, between
5 free and synchronized traffic.

Figure 1 illustrates by virtue of example a route
section of a directional lane of a road traffic network
such as, for example, a motorway section, whose traffic
10 state is estimated, for example, by a traffic centre
for the current point in time, that is to say
determined by computer, and is predicted for future
points in time. Permanently installed and/or moveable
measuring points are provided, as required, in order to
15 detect measured traffic data serving this purpose. The
measured data are received as appropriate by the
traffic centre and appropriately evaluated by a
computation unit there. Reference may be made for
further details of the implementation of such traffic
20 state monitoring systems to the literature quoted at
the beginning and, in particular, also to the German
patent application mentioned there and submitted in
parallel.

25 Characteristic of the present traffic state monitoring
system is the implementation of a monitoring method
which comprises detection of typical pattern profiles
of dense traffic upstream of effective bottlenecks and
classification of the same, with the aid of which it is
30 then possible for the current traffic state to be
estimated comparatively easily and reliably, and
likewise to predict the traffic state to be expected
in future in this route region.

35 Figure 1 shows the case of an example in which an
effective bottleneck is located at a route position $x_{s,F}$
and, owing to correspondingly high traffic volume, an
edge $F_{s,F}$ fixed there has formed between a downstream

P032734/DE/1

- 11 -

region B_F of free traffic and an upstream region B_S of
synchronized traffic. The formation of such an edge $F_{S,F}$
can be detected, for example, with the aid of the
method described in the above-named German Patent
5 Application No. 198 90 35 979.9. In this case, it can
be a spatially fixed bottleneck such as, for example, a
permanent lane reduction at this point, but it can also
be a moveable bottleneck, as formed, for example, by a
"migrating building site" or very slowly moving road-
10 construction vehicles.

In the case of the detection of such a fixed edge $F_{S,F}$
between downstream free traffic B_F and upstream
synchronized traffic B_S , the method then classifies the
15 traffic state upstream of the effective bottleneck into
a pattern of dense traffic. This uses the
experimentally observed fact that in the case of
increased traffic volume entirely typical pattern
profiles of dense traffic form upstream of such
20 effective bottlenecks, that is to say the traffic state
there can be classified into certain typical variants
of a pattern of dense traffic.

Treating the traffic state in this region as a pattern
25 of dense traffic then permits a comparatively reliable
prediction of the future traffic state and of the
travel time required to traverse this region with a
relatively low computational outlay and relatively few
items of measured data information. For this purpose, a
30 specific pattern of the dense traffic is assigned
upstream of the respective effective bottleneck, in
particular at all points with approach roads, on the
basis of measurements of the traffic, that is to say
measurements of traffic parameters representative of
35 the traffic state. Such a pattern of dense traffic
includes appropriate time-dependent and location-
dependent profiles of the considered traffic parameters
such as the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow

P032734/DE/1

- 12 -

and/or the traffic density, and preferably also the travel time corresponding to the pattern respectively present. It is to be seen that these temporal/spatial profiles of the pattern of dense traffic deviate
5 clearly, by more than a prescribed measure, from the corresponding profiles of free traffic. It is to be seen, furthermore, that the temporal/spatial profiles, respectively assigned to the pattern of dense traffic, of the traffic parameters considered such as the
10 average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and the travel time belonging to the pattern have characteristic properties in the case of each effective bottleneck. These properties are characteristic in the sense that they can be reproduced
15 and predicted for different times, for example different times of day and/or different days, that is to say that these characteristic properties, including their characteristic time dependence, can be predicted without validating the parameters of a traffic
20 prediction model used.

As has been said, in the example of Figure 1 the pattern of dense traffic comprises solely the region B_s of synchronized traffic with a downstream edge $F_{s,F}$ at
25 the location $x_{s,F}$ of the effective bottleneck and an upstream edge $F_{F,s}$, whose position $x_{F,s}$ is determined by measurement and computation and tracked for its temporal development, and which is adjoined upstream by a further region B_F of free traffic.

30

A further, typically occurring variant of the pattern of dense traffic is illustrated in Figure 2 and includes, in addition to the region B_s of synchronized traffic, a pinch region B_{cs} adjoining upstream at the
35 upstream edge $F_{cs,s}$ thereof. In the case of such a pinch region (region of congested synchronized traffic), narrow congestion points arise in otherwise synchronized traffic, but they are not individually

P032734/DE/1

- 13 -

tracked. In order to divide the traffic state into the state phases of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic" with or without "pinch regions" and "congestion point", see also the abovementioned, parallel German patent application in which suitable measures are also specified for temporal tracking of the position $x_{GS,s}$ of the downstream edge $F_{GS,s}$, and the position $x_{F,GS}$ of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$, at which a region B_F of free traffic adjoins upstream in turn.

10

Given an appropriately large traffic volume and/or an appropriate route infrastructure, a pattern of dense traffic as illustrated in Figure 3 can be formed as a further, fully expressed variant. In addition to the region B_s of synchronized traffic and the pinch region B_{GS} adjoining upstream thereof, this comprises a region B_{st} adjoining upstream thereof of moving widespread congestion which is finally adjoined upstream again by a region B_F of free traffic. In other words, the presently classified pattern of dense traffic upstream of an effective bottleneck generally comprises the three regions, occurring consecutively upstream, of synchronized traffic B_s , congested synchronized traffic (pinch region) B_{GS} and moving widespread congestion B_{st} , of which Figures 2 and 1 show reduced forms in which the region B_{st} of "moving widespread congestion" and, additionally, the pinch region B_{GS} are lacking, something which is the case, in particular, in the starting phase of the complete pattern of Figure 3. In other words, the complete pattern according to Figure 3 is formed upstream of an effective bottleneck typically in the sequence of Figures 1 to 3 by virtue of the fact that the region B_s of synchronized traffic firstly arises at the effective bottleneck, and the pinch region B_{GS} and possibly also the region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion are then formed upstream of said region B_s when the traffic volume remains sufficiently

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P032734/DE/1

- 17 -

Figure 2, the positions $x_{st,gs}$, $x_{gs,s}$ of the two edges $F_{st,gs}$, $F_{gs,s}$ limiting this region B_{gs} are then also determined continuously for this region as, for example, described in the abovementioned, parallel
5 German patent application. In addition, the associated influx to the bottleneck considered is determined, in turn. This output information is then used in turn, to select from the stored pattern profiles that pattern variant and the corresponding temporal/spatial profile
10 of the traffic parameters considered and of the travel time to be expected from the stored patterns which best fits these input data. On the basis of the selected pattern profile, an improved prediction of the temporal/spatial profile of the traffic parameters
15 considered, such as in particular, the average vehicle speed, the traffic flow and/or the traffic density, and the associated time-dependent travel time is then made.

When the currently present or the predicted pattern
20 also contains the region B_{st} of moving widespread congestion, the temporal development of the individual congestion points $S1$, $S2$, $S3$ there is tracked by means of a method, applied upstream of the upstream edge $F_{st,gs}$ of the pinch region B_{gs} , for dynamic congestion tracking
25 and prediction, as described, for example, in the abovementioned DE 196 47 127 A1, and the congestion points are appropriately considered when determining the associated travel time to be expected.

30 It is seen that the above-described method according to the invention can be used with a relatively low computation outlay to currently estimate the traffic state upstream of effective bottlenecks even in the case of a relatively large traffic volume, and to make
35 a prediction for the future by using a pattern recognition process which utilizes the empirically observed fact that a characteristic pattern of dense traffic forms upstream of such effective bottlenecks in

Whereas the above description of the method considered the case of a pattern of dense traffic forming at an effective bottleneck without influencing further effective bottlenecks, the present method is also suitable for the case of a plurality of effective bottlenecks involved in a pattern of dense traffic, and this will be explained in more detail below. This case arises when the upstream end of a pattern belonging to a first effective bottleneck reaches the position of a second effective bottleneck which is situated closest upstream to the first effective bottleneck. Depending on the development of the pattern of dense traffic, it is possible in addition to the second effective bottleneck to incorporate one or more further effective bottlenecks, which are consecutive upstream, into such an extended pattern of dense traffic. The patterns, extending beyond a plurality of effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic may be denoted as "overarching" patterns of dense traffic, by contrast with the pattern of dense traffic which is to be denoted as an "individual pattern" and contains only respectively one effective bottleneck.

The development of such an overarching pattern starts at the point in time in which the upstream end of a first pattern, belonging to the said first, downstream effective bottleneck, reaches the position of the second effective bottleneck, situated closest upstream. Since the production of synchronized traffic from free traffic at each effective bottleneck is a phase transition of "first order" which arises from every interruption of the traffic which is greater than a critical interruption, the occurrence of the upstream end of the first, downstream pattern of dense traffic can trigger this phase transition. This phase transition occurs when, depending on the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, the state of free traffic at the upstream effective bottleneck was already unstable in any case with the result that the occurrence of the upstream end of the pattern, belonging to the first effective bottleneck, of dense traffic "triggers" the phase transition there. As a result of this phase transition, a region of synchronized traffic or a pinch region is then formed in turn upstream of the upstream, second effective bottleneck.

25 In the case when the pattern, occurring at the upstream effective bottleneck, of dense traffic is one of the reduced forms shown in Figures 1 and 2, this last-mentioned region combines with the region of
30 synchronized traffic or the pinch region of said pattern such that an overarching pattern is formed which is regarded as a newly arising pattern jointly assigned to the two effective bottlenecks, and which is developed further in a fashion similar to an
35 "individual" pattern. The development of the overarching pattern, that is to say the temporal and spatial development of the edges of the various pattern regions, is then in this case a function of the

P032734/DE/1

- 20 -

- properties of the two effective bottlenecks incorporated. As in the case of the "individual" pattern, the overarching pattern allocated to the two bottlenecks is stored with the corresponding time-
5 dependent and/or location-dependent profile of the various traffic parameters considered, and is taken into account in the further monitoring and prediction of traffic states.
- 10 The procedure outlined for incorporating an effective bottleneck which is respectively next upstream, which is achieved by a downstream pattern of dense traffic, is carried out upstream successively for all effective bottlenecks from one effective bottleneck to the next.
- 15 It is possible thereby to allocate to a traffic network one or more overarching patterns which in some cases can achieve a substantial extension of, for example, several tens or even hundreds of kilometres. Each overarching pattern comprises a sequence of complete
20 individual patterns corresponding to Figure 3 and/or reduced patterns corresponding to Figures 1 and 2. Moreover, an overarching pattern can also have a form in which a region of "moving widespread congestion", which has arisen in a pattern, situated downstream, of
25 dense traffic, overlaps with a region of synchronized traffic and/or a pinch region in a pattern, situated upstream, of dense traffic. This is possible by virtue of the fact that moving widespread congestion passes through freely upstream both by means of synchronized
30 traffic and by means of pinch regions. Moreover, the speed of the downstream edge of each instance of moving widespread congestion is a characteristic quantity whose mean value does not depend on whether an instance of moving widespread congestion passes through by means
35 of free traffic or by means of synchronized traffic or by means of pinch regions.

P032734/DE/1

- 22 -

lower than in the state of free traffic. Given free traffic with sufficiently high traffic flow, even a relatively small traffic interruption such as is represented, for example, by widespread congestion passing through is enough to "trigger" transition into the state of synchronized traffic.

If, now, a region of moving widespread congestion as upstream region of a "full" individual pattern or as a corresponding subregion of an overarching pattern has reached with its upstream end the upstream neighbouring effective bottleneck and triggered the formation there of synchronized traffic, an individual or overarching pattern having the structures in accordance with Figures 1 to 3 can form in turn upstream of this bottleneck when this is induced by the traffic volume and the route infrastructure, it being possible for this pattern formation to be accomplished or developed further virtually independently of the pattern structure at effective bottlenecks situated downstream.

The production of regions of synchronized traffic or pinch regions and of regions of moving widespread congestion can be understood and detected from the following considerations. In free traffic, the total traffic outflow Q at the cross section of a respective effective bottleneck is the same size on average as the total upstream net traffic influx Q_n to the localization point of the effective bottleneck, taking account of all approach roads and exits in the relevant region. In this case, the localization point of an effective bottleneck is that point where the downstream edge between synchronized traffic, which arises from the existence of this effective bottleneck, and free traffic is localized downstream thereof. In other words, this net traffic influx to the effective bottleneck is the total traffic flow of all vehicles which must be driven through the associated

stored not only in temporary narrow congestion points, but also in lasting widespread ones. This criterion can therefore be used to detect a formation of the full pattern in accordance with Figure 3, and is at its most exact when the total net influx Q_n corresponds to free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2, once again for each direction of influx and outflow.

Alternatively, another criterion can be formulated for the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region. This criterion is based on the fact that in a direction "j" of influx or outflow the region of moving widespread congestion arises upstream of the pinch region when the total associated net influx Q_{nj} of this direction "j" in the free traffic upstream of the upstream edge $F_{F,GS}$ of the pinch region in accordance with Figure 2 is sufficiently large by comparison with the average total flow $Q_{nout,j}$ in this direction "j" downstream of narrow congestion points of the pinch region. This alternative criterion points consequently to the production of the region of moving widespread congestion upstream of the pinch region when the difference $Q_{nj} - Q_{nout,j}$ for a period Δt of at least one associated third minimum period Δt_3 is on average greater than or equal to an associated third excess value ΔQ_3 . In this case, for the three described cases the three minimum periods Δt_1 , Δt_2 , Δt_3 are, just like the three excess values ΔQ_1 , ΔQ_2 , ΔQ_3 for the respective effective bottleneck or for the respective group of effective bottlenecks which are responsible for an overarching pattern are prescribed variables, while the maximum traffic flow Q_{smax} in the synchronized traffic and the average total flow $Q_{nout,j}$ downstream of narrow congestion points of a direction "j" are variables whose values are to be determined from experimental traffic data for each effective bottleneck.

An overarching pattern which can be stored with its temporal and spatial characteristic and can be called up to be used for a traffic prediction can not only arise due to overlaps of regions of moving widespread congestion with regions of synchronized traffic and/or pinch regions, and with the movement of the congestion point, but can be realized at least by means of the two following processes.

In a first case, in the course of time the upstream end of a pattern of dense traffic firstly reaches the point of the effective bottleneck next upstream, after which the upstream end of the partial pattern, formed by the last effective bottleneck as upstream part of the further extending overarching pattern, of dense traffic reaches a bottleneck next upstream, etc. This process can last for hours and be predicted, since the development of each individual pattern at each effective bottleneck can be predicted as part of the overarching pattern. The corresponding characteristic of this process of the production and the further temporal and spatial development of the overarching pattern is stored and is available in a fashion which can be called up for a traffic prediction in the traffic network.

As a second case, it can be that the previously described process of the production of an overarching pattern is interrupted by virtue of the fact that the traffic volume in the surroundings of the effective bottleneck next upstream is too low for a pattern of dense traffic to arise there. However, at an effective bottleneck further upstream some moving congestion points can nevertheless once again trigger a pattern, corresponding to this bottleneck, of dense traffic. Because they propagate upstream, the congestion points can be situated at a relatively large distance of, for

P032734/DE/1

- 27 -

a traffic centre for evaluation by a fuzzy logic system. This includes a unit 3 for fuzzifying the input variables, a fuzzy interference system 4 for deriving fuzzy result values by applying prescribable fuzzy rules to the fuzzified input variables, and a unit 5 for defuzzifying the fuzzy result values, that is to say for forming a crisp result value. Exactly one of the values of "free traffic", "synchronized traffic", "pinch region" or "congestion point" is output as a result for the current traffic state of the considered measuring point M, see block 6 in Figure 4. In the case of the use of predicted instead of current values of the traffic intensity $q(t)$ and the average speed $v(t)$ the fuzzy logic system outputs as a result the traffic state at the measuring point M predicted for this future point in time, see block 7 of Figure 4. The mode of procedure in the abovementioned parallel German patent application, to which reference may be made, is described to this extent.

The present method is based thereon and additionally provides a further-reaching traffic prediction which is based on the prediction information obtained in accordance with block 7 of Figure 4. Specifically, in this case the traffic state is classified in the fashion explained above with regard to the typical pattern of dense traffic for route sections upstream of effective bottlenecks of the traffic network, and the best-fitting pattern is selected from the stored pattern variants and associated profiles when the measuring point M forms an effective bottleneck and dense traffic forms upstream thereof because of a correspondingly large traffic volume, as illustrated by a block 8.

Figure 5 shows a method example which is largely similar to that of Figure 4 and additionally permits the detection of the upstream edge $F_{F,s}$ of a respective

P032734/DE/1

- 28 -

region B_s of synchronized traffic even for positions $x_{F,s}$ between two measuring points A, B, including a prediction of this edge position $x_{F,s}$ even in such intermediate regions, see block 9 of Figure 5. It is possible to this extent to refer once more to the description of this functionality in the abovementioned, parallel German patent application. The present method example is based thereon and uses the prediction data, obtained in accordance with block 9, on the extent and position of a respective region B_s of synchronized traffic to make a further-reaching traffic prediction of the dense traffic forming there and in the region upstream thereof in accordance with the finding explained above and the temporal tracking of the associated typical pattern of dense traffic when the dense traffic is to be ascribed to an effective bottleneck in whose surroundings a downstream edge of the region B_s of synchronized traffic remains fixed. As specified in block 10 of Figure 5, for this purpose the predicted traffic data for this route section are used to select the best-fitting pattern variant of dense traffic from those stored, which is then used for further evaluation purposes and, in particular, prediction purposes.

It goes without saying that, as explained above, the mode of procedure described above with the aid of Figures 4 and 5 can be used not only to determine current and predict future individual patterns of dense traffic in which only in each case one effective bottleneck is involved, but also current or future "overarching" patterns of dense traffic in which in each case a plurality of effective bottlenecks are involved. In this case, the method is applied in parallel for the plurality of effective bottlenecks of a respective overarching pattern which are involved.

FTP/E Dr.EW/fr

Patent Claims

5 1. Method for monitoring the traffic state in a traffic network with one or more effective bottlenecks, in particular in a road traffic network, in the case of which

- the traffic state is classified, taking account of recorded traffic measured data for one or more traffic parameters which comprise at least information on the traffic intensity and/or the average vehicle speed, into in each case one of a plurality of state phases which comprise at least the state phases of "free traffic" and "synchronized traffic",

characterized in that

- the traffic state upstream of a respective effective bottleneck of the traffic network is classified, when an edge (F_S, F) fixed thereat is detected between downstream free traffic (B_F) and upstream synchronized traffic (B_S) , as a pattern, representative of the respective effective bottleneck, of dense traffic which includes one or more different regions (B_S, B_{GS}, B_{St}) which are consecutive upstream, of different state phase composition, and an associated profile of the traffic parameters taken into account for the state phase determination.

2. Method according to Claim 1, further characterized in that the traffic state is classified, when an individual pattern, arising initially at an associated, effective bottleneck, of dense traffic reaches one or more effective bottlenecks following upstream, in this route section as an overarching pattern, representative of the included effective bottlenecks, of dense traffic which, like a respective individual pattern, includes

P032734/DE/1

- 30 -

one or more different regions, which are consecutive upstream, of different state phase composition, and an associated profile of the traffic parameters taken into account for the state phase determination.

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3. Method according to Claim 1 or 2, further characterized in that the respective pattern, belonging to one effective bottleneck or common, as overarching pattern, to a plurality of effective bottlenecks, of
10 dense traffic with its time-dependent and location-dependent traffic parameter profile is empirically determined from recorded traffic measured data and stored in a fashion which can be called up.

15 4. Method according to one of Claims 1 to 3, further characterized in that it is established for the respective bottleneck as a function of vehicle influx whether the pattern comprises only a region (B_s) of synchronized traffic or comprises this and a pinch
20 region (B_{gs}), adjoining upstream, or comprises these two regions and a region (B_{st}), adjoining upstream, of moving widespread congestion, the associated edge positions between the respective different state phases are determined, and each of the three pattern variants
25 is assigned a corresponding time-dependent and location-dependent profile of the average vehicle speed and/or the traffic flow and/or the traffic density.

5. The method according to one of Claims 2 to 4,
30 further characterized in that it is established for the traffic network as a function of the vehicle flows where and in what temporal sequence overarching patterns arise, in what temporal and spatial sequence the regions of "synchronized traffic", "pinch region"
35 and "moving widespread congestion" arise and develop in each of the overarching patterns, and whether overlaps of such regions take place, and for a respective overlap the temporal and spatial characteristic of

P032734/DE/1

- 31 -

congestion points through regions of synchronized traffic and/or congested synchronized traffic is predicted.

5 6. Method according to Claim 4 or 5, further characterized in that the temporal evolution of the edge positions ($F_{F,s}$, $F_{GS,s}$, $F_{F,GS}$, $F_{St,GS}$) of the various regions of the respective pattern of dense traffic, and/or the edge positions of congestion points inside
10 various overarching patterns, and/or the occurrence of a respective new overarching pattern is currently estimated and predicted for future points in time.

7. Method according to one of Claims 4 to 6, further
15 characterized in that the associated travel time to be expected is additionally currently estimated and/or predicted for future points in time for the respective individual or overarching pattern of dense traffic.

20 8. Method according to one of Claims 4 to 7, further characterized in that the current vehicle influx is detected for the respective individual or overarching pattern of dense traffic, and the current positions of the edges between the various pattern regions are
25 determined, and these current input data are used to select the best-fitting pattern profile from the stored pattern profiles and to use it as a basis for predicting the future traffic state in the relevant route region.

P032734/DE/1

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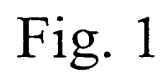
Abstract

1. Method for monitoring traffic state.

2.1. The invention relates to a method for monitoring the traffic state in a traffic network with effective bottlenecks, in the case of which the traffic state is classified, taking account of recorded traffic measured data for one or more traffic parameters which comprise at least information on the traffic intensity and/or the average vehicle speed, into in each case one of a plurality of state phases which comprise at least the state phases of free traffic and synchronized traffic.

2.2. According to the invention, in the case of the occurrence of an edge, fixed at an effective bottleneck, between downstream free traffic and upstream synchronized traffic, the traffic state upstream thereof is classified as a pattern, representative of the respective bottleneck, of dense traffic which includes one or more different regions which are consecutive upstream, of different state phase composition, and an associated profile of the traffic parameters taken into account for the state phase determination.

2.3. Use, for example, for the purpose of monitoring traffic state, including traffic state prediction in a road traffic network.



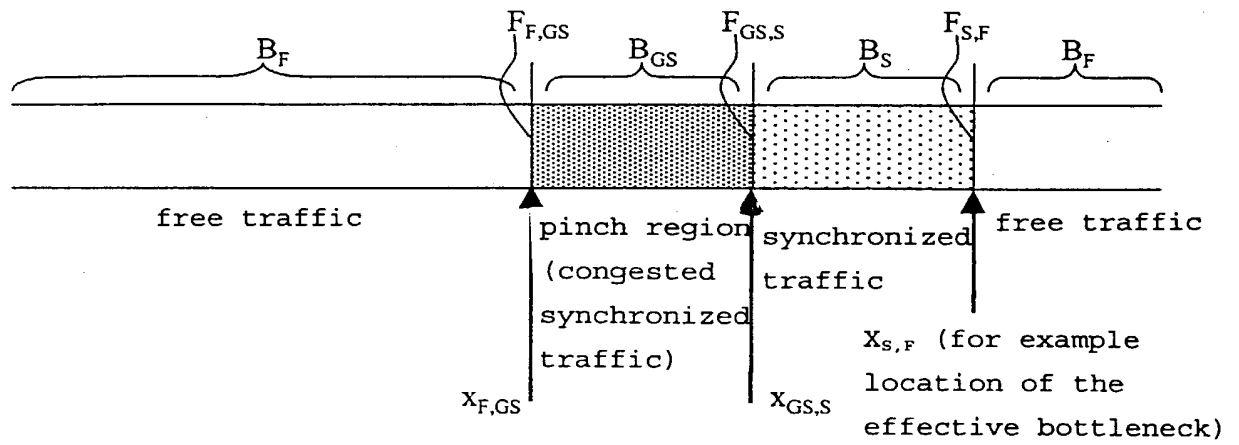


Fig. 2

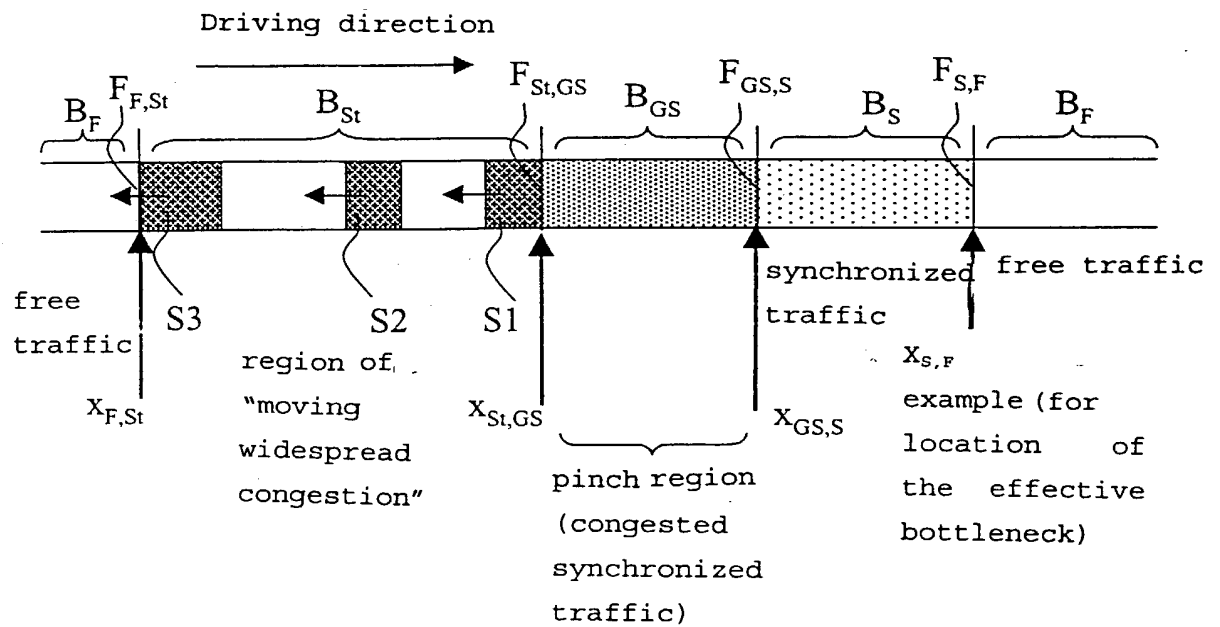


Fig. 3

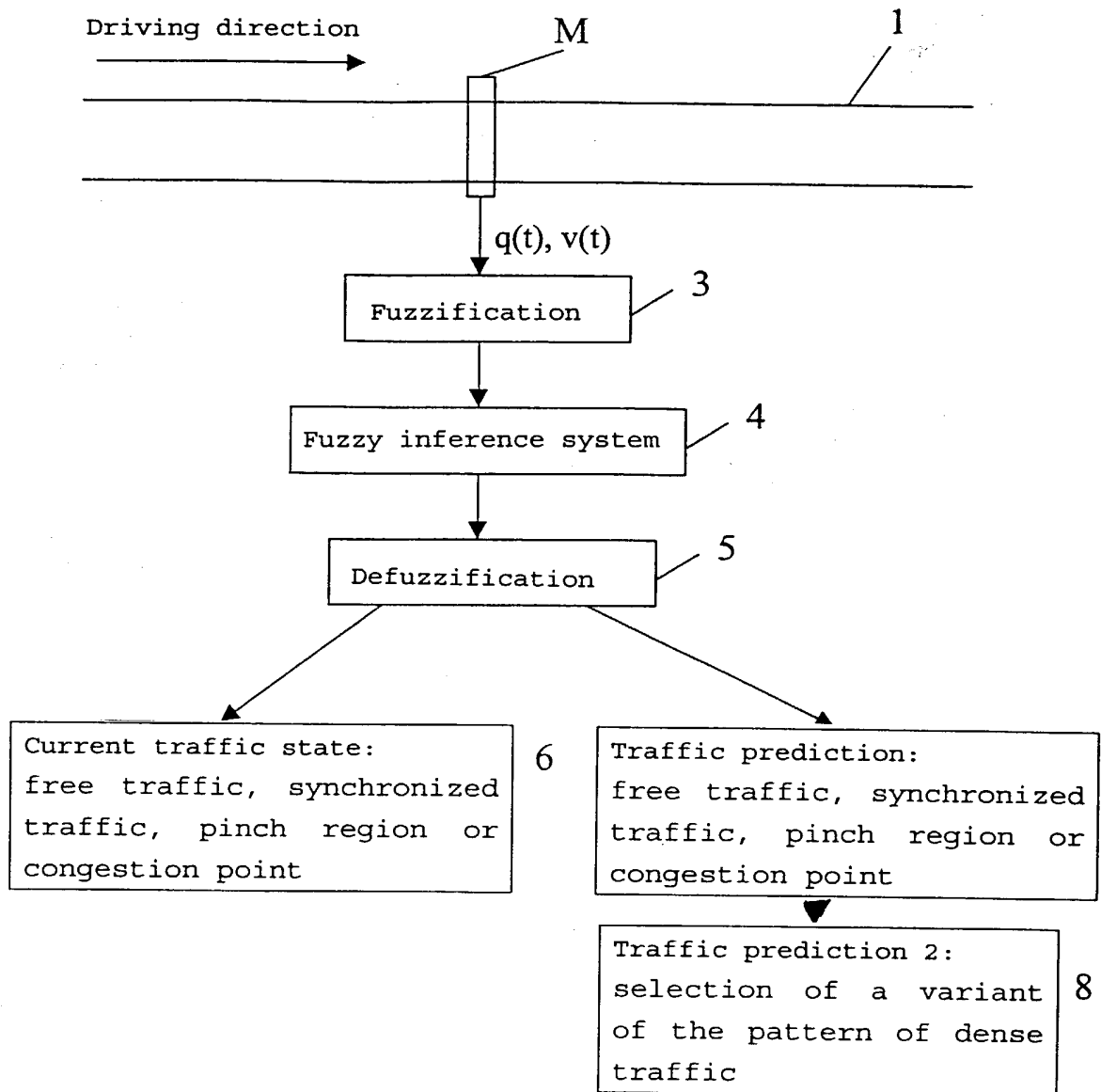


Fig. 4

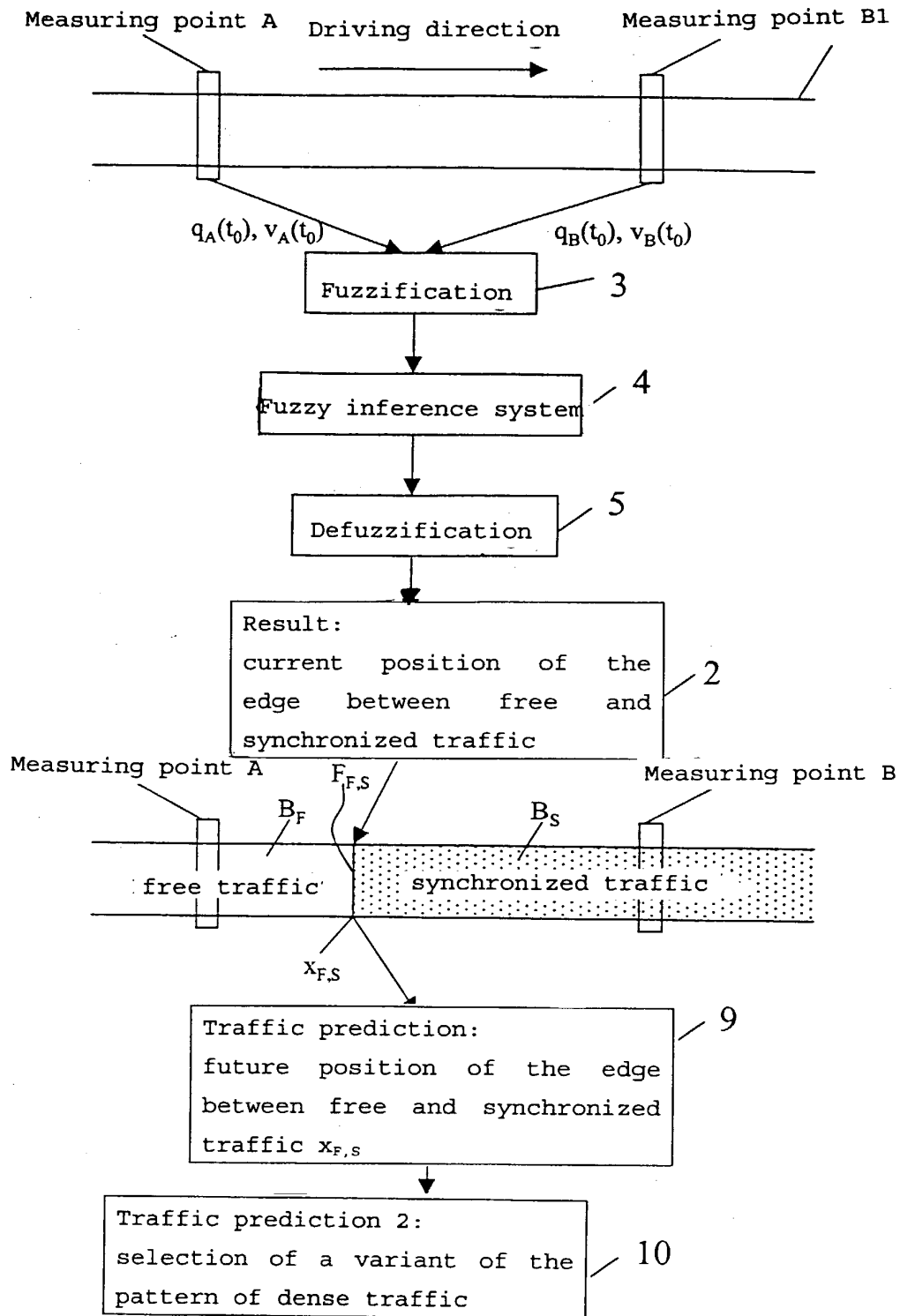


Fig. 5

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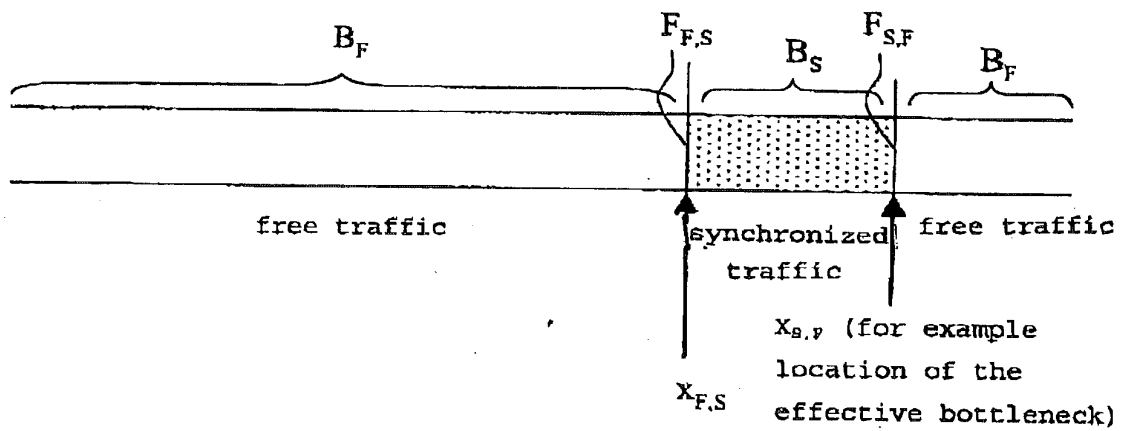


Fig. 1

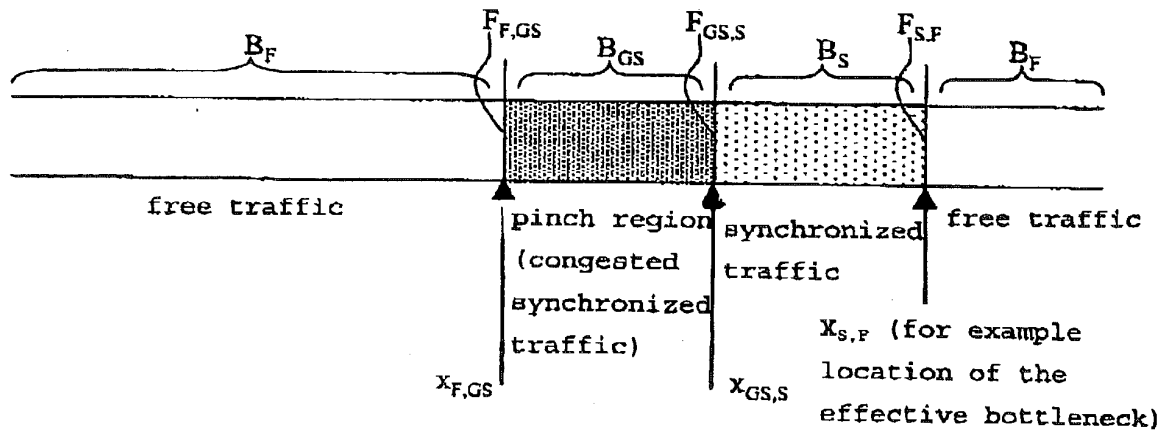


Fig. 2

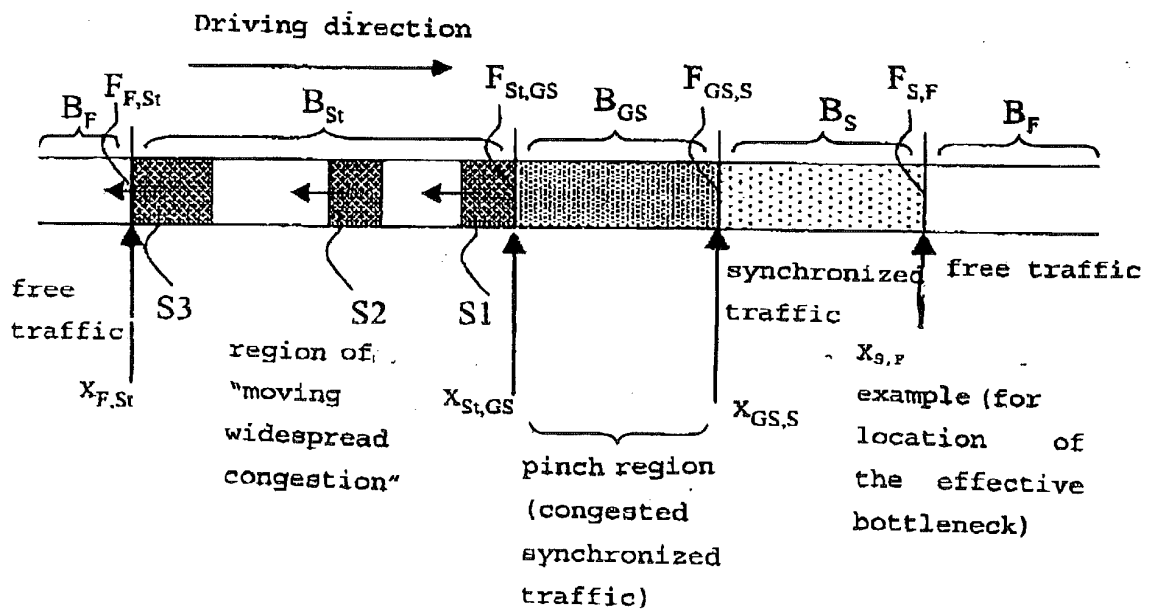


Fig. 3

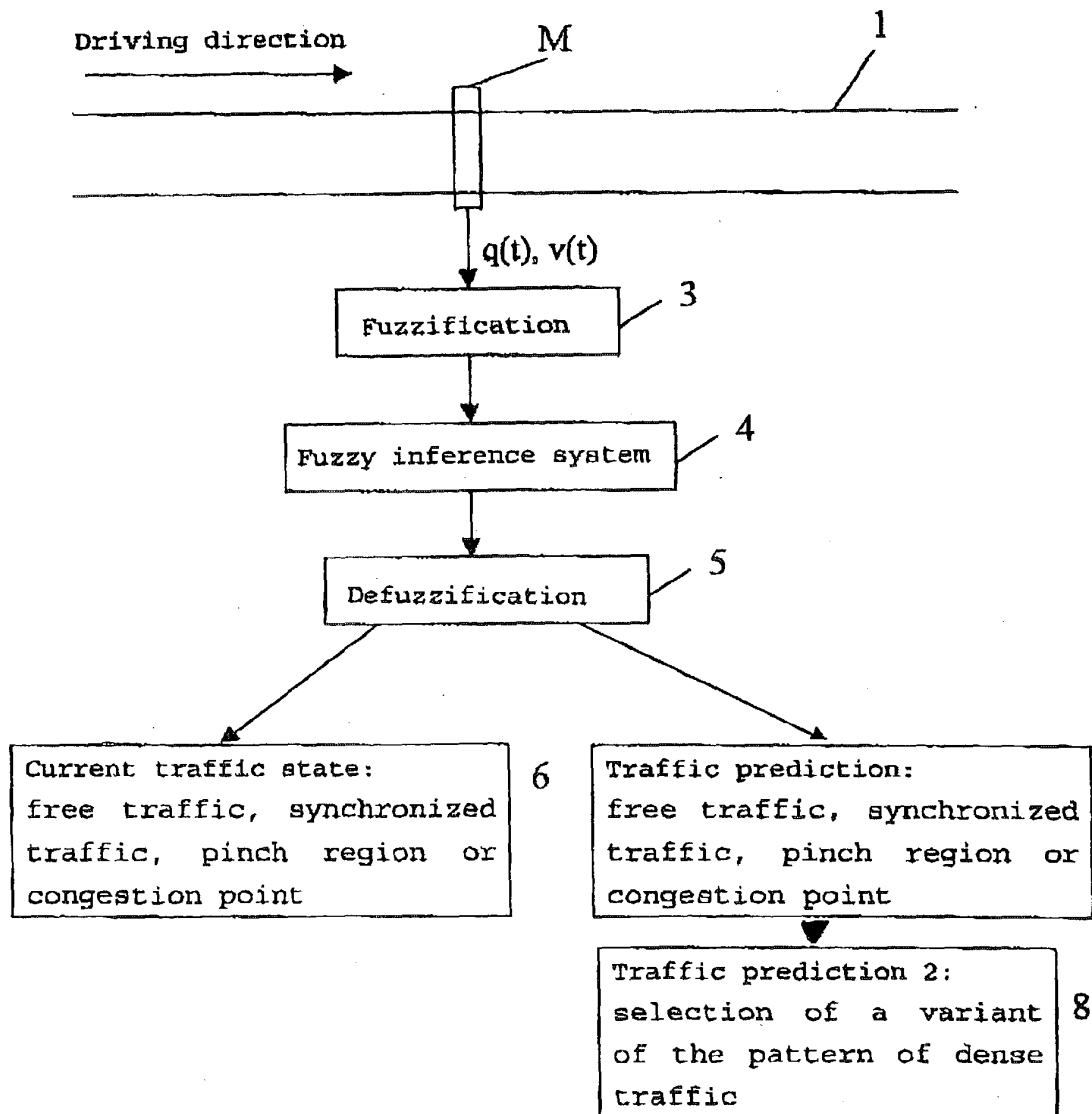


Fig. 4

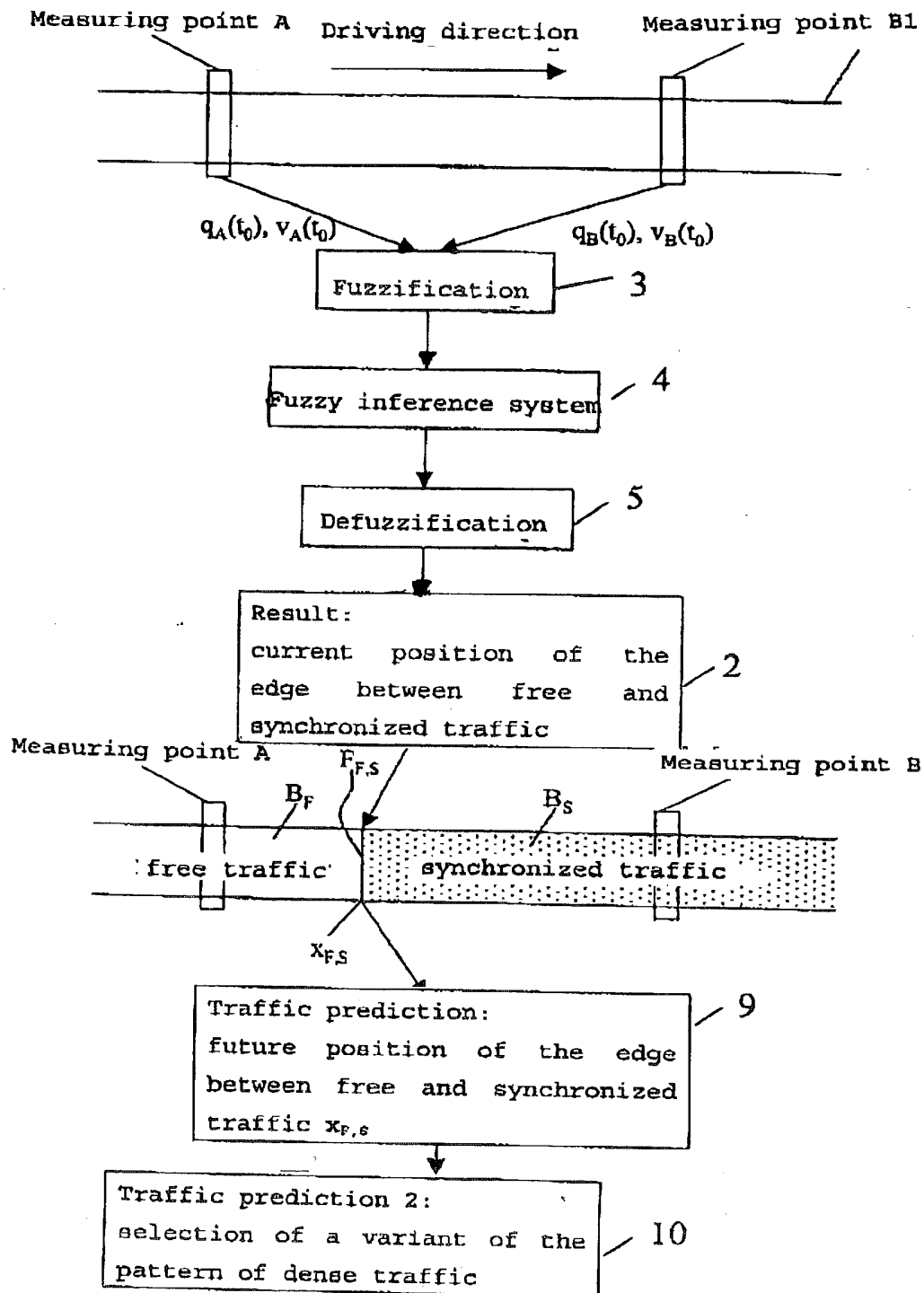


Fig. 5

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY
(For Use with Application Data Sheet)

As the below named inventor(s), I/we declare that:

This declaration is directed to:

☐ The attached application, or
☒ was filed as PCT International Application No. PCT/EP00/08329 on 26 August 2000
☐ Application No. , filed on , as amended on (if applicable);

I/we believe that I/we am/are the original and first inventor(s) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought;

I/we have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified application, including the claims, as amended by any amendment specifically referred to above;

I/we acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me/us to be material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR 1.56, including material information which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the National or PCT International filing date of the continuation-in-part application, if applicable;

I/we hereby appoint the practitioners at **CROWELL & MORING L.L.P.**, whose Customer Number is:

**23911**

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

as my/our attorneys to prosecute the application identified above, and to transact all business in the United States Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith; and

All statements made herein of my/our own knowledge are true; all statements made herein on information and belief are believed to be true, and further these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under 18 U.S.C. 1001, and may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.

FULL NAME(S) of INVENTOR(S)

1-00
Signature: 
Inventor one: Boris KERNER
Citizen of: Germany

Date: 15 March 2002

☐ Additional Inventors on Attached sheet if checked

APPLICATION DATA SHEET

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| Country of residence:: | Germany |
| Citizenship Country:: | Germany |

CORRESPONDENCE INFORMATION

Correspondence customer number:: 23911

APPLICATION INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Title line one:: | METHOD FOR MONITORING THE |
| Title line two:: | CONDITION OF TRAFFIC FOR A |
| Title line three:: | TRAFFIC NETWORK COMPRISING |
| Title line four:: | EFFECTIVE NARROW POINTS |
| Total drawing sheets:: | Five (5) |
| Formal drawings?:: | No |
| Application type:: | Utility |
| Docket Number:: | 225/50974 |

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Representative customer number:: 23911

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATIONS

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Filing date:: 14 September 1999
Country:: Germany
Priority claimed:: YES

Foreign application one:: PCT/EP00/08329
Filing date:: 26 August 2000 (26.08.2000)
Country:: PCT
Priority claimed:: YES